VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1, SPRING 2017

The Legislative Scholar

The Newsletter of the Legislative Studies Section of the American Political Science Association

Contents

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Supporting Your Legislative Research: Sabbaticals, Grants, and Research Opportunities

Laurel Harbridge Yong
Northwestern University
and
Gisela Sin
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of The Legislative Scholar! It's been a year since the first issue of the new revamped newsletter came out, and many people have been helpful along the way in producing this newsletter. Many thanks to the members of our first Editorial Board. We decided to renew half of the Board, to have continuity as well as allow for constant innovation of ideas. We thank Justin Grimmer, Shane Martin, George Vanberg, and Jennifer Victor for their tremendous help and suggestions during our first year. Thanks to Jennifer Hayes Clark, Mike Crespin, Carol Mershon, and Chris Mooney for agreeing to serve one more year on the Board. Last, but not least, we welcome the new members, Stefanie Bailer, Mark Jones, Kristin Kanthak, Michael Minta, and Sophia Wallace. We also want to thank Collin Paschall, our Editorial Assistant, for his fantastic work this past year in helping to produce this newsletter. Our current issue includes an excellent group of scholars who have been very successful at applying for grants and have also been part of committees evaluating those applications. The symposium contains plenty of advice on applying for resources to support legislative research, how to make the most of sabbaticals, and how to exploit collaborative opportunities. We also have a special section on archival research, and on a new dataset, the DCinbox.

Academic success hinges on the development of a successful research agenda, but many scholars worry that funding sources are shrinking or are geared toward narrow topics where their own research does not fit. For the last several years, NSF grants to political science have been under attack, including adding a requirement that proposals benefit national security or economic interests. When we began brainstorming this issue of *The Legislative Scholar*, we noticed that many of the scholars who have been successful at getting substantial foundation grants did so many years ago. It seems that today, many scholars are mostly leveraging their own research accounts and internal grants from their university. While these internal sources are important for funding research projects and may come with greater flexibility, external funding and research opportunities remain important, especially for projects that are long term and involve large amounts of original data collection. In this issue of *The Legislative Scholar* we solicited articles that delve into the broader research environment – making the most of sabbaticals, applying for grants, and how to best leverage cooperative resources.

How should you make the most of a sabbatical, and what are some mistakes to avoid? Frances Lee highlights the importance of making sure that a sabbatical is more than just a teaching leave. She also talks about the benefits that come from several different types of sabbaticals, including the APSA Congressional Fellowship and both early and late-stage book writing.

What are some grant opportunities for legislative scholars and what makes applications successful in this area? What types of expenses should you look to cover, and what types of projects may be politically difficult for a funder? Several articles touch on these and other questions about grants generally, through the NSF, and through legislative-focused resources like the Dirksen Congressional Center. Brian Humes, Program Director in Political Science at NSF emphasizes the importance of theory and the relevance of the broader implications of a project. He also talks extensively about one of the NSF myths: that they only fund data collection. Shane Martin from Essex suggests that scholars begin writing a proposal from the assumption that nobody cares about your dependent variable. Selling the importance of the research agenda is the first step to a successful grant application. Carol Mershon from UVA offers general advice about how to craft a successful grant application, as well as advice about successful NSF applications. Sometimes scholars can avoid political landmines not by changing their topic, but simply by being attentive to their title and abstract description. However, the first step to receiving a major grant is taking the initiative to apply. Sophia Wallace from the University of Washington notes that many of the NSF grant proposals are by senior scholars and those at large research institutions. More junior scholars and those at non-research institutions are underrepresented, as are those in historically underrepresented groups. Chris Bonneau from Pittsburgh translates his experience serving on panels and evaluating proposals into concrete advice for students interested in applying for NSF Dissertation Improvement Grants. In addition to general advice about what makes a proposal successful, Bonneau notes the importance of thinking through ethical issues and how your study mitigates them, especially where the study is manipulating behavior or potentially affecting elections. For legislative scholars focused on the United States Congress, a great resource for small-to-mid-sized grants is the Dirksen Congressional Center. Frank Mackaman from the Dirksen Center takes us under the hood of the grant review process, highlighting what these grants can and can't pay for, the importance of avoiding jargon and making the relevance of the research clear to a non-specialist, and some general advice about using archival resources.

Leveraging large grants or research opportunities often requires collaborative efforts either for the research project itself or for bringing together funding sources. Fabio Wasserfallen from University of Salzburg discusses the Horizon 2020 grant and how younger scholars can coordinate with more experienced colleagues to put together a stronger team proposal. He also offers some suggestions for managing a large interdisciplinary research project like EMU Choices. In some cases, teams come together to apply for funding. In other cases, they can pool existing resources to take advantage of a research opportunity. Jason Casellas from Houston discusses how he and a group of colleagues collaborated on a module in the Cooperative Congressional Election Study for research on representation and other legislative issues. Charles Finocchiaro of the University of South Carolina discusses how to make the most of archival research, with advice on identifying useful materials, how to plan for your visit, and resources for funding this type of work.

We round out this issue of *The Legislative Scholar* with a dataset overview by Lindsey Cormack on the DCinbox – an innovative database of over 80,000 official communications from members of Congress since October of 2009.

As you can see, we have a great group of scholars giving us advice about how to best use a sabbatical or how to think about grants. We really enjoyed reading the articles in this new issue of *The Legislative Scholar*, and we hope that you do too. Finally, if you have ideas for possible symposia or special topics, or would like to publicize a dataset of broad appeal, please contact us at l-harbridge@northwestern.edu and gsin@illinois.edu.

Laurel and Gisela

Sabbaticals, Grants, and Research Opportunities

Making the Most of your Sabbatical: An Interview with Frances Lee

Katti McNally
University of Maryland
with
Frances Lee
University of Maryland

KM: What do you consider to be the purpose of taking a sabbatical?

FL: Well, a sabbatical can serve a lot of different purposes. In fact, when I reflect back on the three sabbaticals that I've had over the course of my career, I've used them in three different ways. My first sabbatical, which I got right after I was promoted to Associate Professor and got tenure, was to do the Congressional Fellowship Program. And that was just an experience— working in a member's office, not able to do my own research, working for someone else—my time was not my own. It was a really great learning experience and gave me lots of ideas for future research, but it was not a research oriented sabbatical. My second sabbatical I used to finish a book. So by that point, I had done most of the research and it was just a matter of pulling everything together and getting the final manuscript ready. The third sabbatical I had, I was in the early stages of developing a new book. And so I used it to begin to hammer out the overall structure, what the different chapters would do, and to do some of the early research. I can't say that I think any one of those ways was a better use of the time.

KM: You've mentioned that there are a lot of different times in the course of a project that you can take a sabbatical, or that it can be more of an experience and idea generating process, like with your Congressional Fellowship. Do you have a series of suggestions for how to plan for any type of sabbatical before it happens?

FL: Yes. Certainly have goals: what do you expect or hope to achieve? I knew when I went to do the Congressional Fellowship that I wasn't going to be doing a whole lot of my own research. I did everything that I could to wrap up the projects that were pending before the fellowship started, so that I could get them out under review and not have too many loose ends, sort of recognizing that this is how that time would be used. In the case of the other two sabbaticals, it was also a case of planning out ahead of time what I hoped to get done. You know, the universities you work for usually ask to have some sort of a plan. And that can feel like some kind of bureaucratic paperwork, but it is actually very useful to sit down and figure out what you intend to do with these months, and to collect your thoughts and hold yourself accountable.

> "Certainly have goals: what do you expect or hope to achieve?"

KM: So what's the best advice you would give someone who's starting a sabbatical for the first time?

FL: Well, a sabbatical is supposed to be more than just a teaching leave. You should reduce your other burdens as well. That's easier to do earlier in your career than later. And I can't say that I've always adhered to that advice myself. My first sabbatical, the Congressional Fellowship, was a genuine sabbatical. I really was removed from service duties, from administrative work, I had virtually no advising to do during that period, and as a brand-new, newly appointed Associate Professor my reviewing duties were limited, so I really was able just to focus on making the most of the fellowship. But when it came to my other sabbaticals, I was still here in residence at my university, I did not relinquish any administrative duties that I had, and I continued to direct the honors program throughout the fellowship, and I was continuing to serve on whatever university committees I was on. And that's not really making the most of the time. It's hard to set aside some of these duties that you have, in that you have to find someone else who will do them, and sometimes it's easier to say, well, I'll just keep doing them rather than trying to track someone down, but it does have cost if you don't say no and police your time when you have a sabbatical.

KM: You've mentioned that obviously the more commitments that you have, the more other obligations that you have, the more difficult it is to sort of detangle and step back. Do you have any tips for how to organize your time to make sure that you are getting the benefits of being on sabbatical while also dealing with other responsibilities?

FL: It's probably beneficial to get out of your regular routines. Many people choose to find another place to be in residence. I'm sure that that entails some costs, in that if you're going to go be in residence at another university you have to figure out how your computer systems work, and learn to navigate their libraries, and there will be some transaction costs in doing that. But it is good way to get away from the regular demands of your home institution. But even if you're not going to go and be in residence somewhere else at another institution, maybe you could spend more time in a library carrel, or just not being instantly accessible to people who come and knock on your office door. That might be a way of finding some of the benefits of being away without having to actually pick up and move.

KM: In doing some reading in preparation for this interview, I found that one of the things some people say is that a sabbatical should also be an important opportunity to recharge. What are your thoughts on this perspective, and on balancing research goals with the need to recharge?

FL: You know, I think a lot of people see a sabbatical as a time to pull full steam ahead on a research project. That may not be the original purpose behind a sabbatical, that instead a slower pace may be good for creativity, but, in general, in my own experience, I've always regarded that time away from teaching as such a great opportunity that you wouldn't want to not take full advantage of it while you have it. So, I probably haven't done enough by way of really stepping back and recharging with my sabbaticals up to now.

KM: What would you say would be possible mistakes to avoid when taking a sabbatical?

FL: I mentioned failing to police your time, and basically converting a sabbatical into only a teaching leave, as opposed to a full-fledged sabbatical. I'm sure that that's a mistake. If the university is prepared to grant you a sabbatical, and you're not really taking it except from teaching, then you're not really taking full advantage of the opportunity. But, as I mentioned, it's hard to fully disentangle, so I can also understand why it's difficult to do that. And let me say, I also think it's quite common for people not to be realistic about what you can accomplish in a semester. For most people a sabbatical is a semester leave, though some can choose to take a year leave. But those months seem to loom wide open, and you think you've got all this time, but in fact, it goes quickly. So to be aware of what is reasonable to accomplish in that time, and to not mislead yourself about that. As you step in, try not to procrastinate, and to realize that the time is going to go by just as fast in your sabbatical as it does during the semester. The time is the time, and so, make the most of it.

NSF Grants in Legislative Politics: An Interview with Brian Humes

Christopher D. Grady
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
with
Brian Humes
National Science Foundation

CG: Hi Brian, thank you for speaking with me about NSF grants in legislative politics today.

BH: Hi Chris. You're welcome, happy to do it.

CG: For our first question, beyond the general grant writing advice that scholars get from talking to colleagues or going to grant writing workshops, what other things are particularly relevant for grants that involve legislative research for NSF? What is particularly relevant that people won't hear about in workshops?

BH: One thing is the notion that what NSF is really interested in is the collection of large datasets. We like that, but it is not a requirment, and people should not necessarily think of [their application] that way. Especially people should not let their proposal be driven by the notion of collecting data. The proposal should driven by the theory and then how you can test that theory, and that includes what evidence might be needed.

Number two, and a big problem with some proposals now: you really need to think broadly about your research.

There might be proposals that are good from a legislative point of view. For me as a Congressional scholar, I look at these proposals and may say "wow, I like that!". But the work needs to spread itself out more and say "what are implications for XYZ? Can we generalize beyond US Congress," for example. And that's why I think comparative legislative proposals tend to do better at this point in time than just those focusing on the U.S. Congress.

Those are the two things I would emphasize: Focus on theory, and then going beyond – have implications for a wider range of scholars and a wider range of studies As I tell people: there's lots of interesting data, much more than we can fund the collection of, and we need some way to distinguish it. We can distinguish it through the interesting question you ask and how you answer it.

CG: So going back to the building blocks of what makes good research. Motivate it with theory, don't just collect and look at data, and speak beyond immediate context.

BH: That's exactly right. Too many people forget about that as they get wrapped into the process of what they're researching. Sometimes proposers get the wrong advice or focus on things a bit differently than we want.

I use comparative politics as a place that's doing better right now and doing that sort of thing. But something that happens to comparative proposals is that they come in with cases selected, but don't tell us why they selected the cases. We all know they have a reason for selecting those cases. We know they didn't just open a big book of legislatures and closed their eyes and pointed. They chose something for a reason, but they're so close to it that they forget to tell us. And it's so easy for reviewers and panelists to go after for that.

CG: Do you think some of it is that people don't want to admit they chose it because they had contacts in the country, so it isn't perceived as being based on convenience?

BH: Sometimes it might be convenience, but other times people just don't think about it. Even if it is a convenience thing, I don't think it's bad to have that decision based on convenience if you can generalize and tell us, beyond convenience, why you are looking at this situation and what does it tell us? For example, I've seen proposals that have done very well, on the dissertation side, where the student is looking at one particular legislature because they know the language. It's often a situation where not many people have studied the legislature because of language difficulties. They've been successful with NSF partially because they are able to overcome those language barriers, but more because of how they frame their question. They're connecting it to what we know about other legislatures, and what more we'll know when their study is added. So essentially they say "I'm using other people's work, adding my case to that, and going beyond." It's about what we are going to learn that we don't already know.

CG: You've mentioned a lot about the dissertation work. Do the projects that NSF funds for dissertation work tend to be different than other things that NSF funds?

BH: Yes, and you probably want me to tell you why! For one thing, we're more likely to fund qualitative or mixed methods work at the dissertation level than at the full level. The reason is because we receive more at the dissertation level. I have not been able to persuade senior qualitative scholars to come in as much as I have with the dissertation students, but hopefully that will change over time.

The other difference is that with senior proposals we are more likely to see some proof of concept. "Here is a pilot experiment and here are my results," or "I've done some data collection and here are my results." To show feasibility. We tend not to see that as much from the graduate students due to the stage they're in. And it's not expected as much.

So those are the two big things: dissertation proposals tend to involve more qualitative/mixed methods work, and full proposals tend to have some preliminary data already collected as a proof of concept.

CG: What are some really cool and innovative dissertation proposals you've seen recently and that the NSF funded?

BH: Oh, that's a tough one! I'd say...A few years ago there was a qualitative data search looking at which factors led imams to be radicalized in Islam. It was essentially looking where the money comes from – who is providing funds for these imams to continue their education. And the investigators found that people who become radicalized tend to get their money from more radical sources. That's not surprising. But the important thing was that it was not a selection mechanism of ideology beforehand. The ideological change happened later in the process. So I really liked that one.

There was another one several years ago, similar to Kristin Kanthak and Jon Woon's work at Pittsburgh. It looked at why women are less likely to be involved in representative processes than men. This proposal used a similar math test to Woon and Kanthak to show expertise in a different area. And then they observed if women would volunteer to run against somebody else, to be the leader of the group in solving problems, when it was clear that they have the ability to do it. And they found that women are less likely than men to take that risk and jump into a competitive setting. So that was a little bit different and innovative.

Those are two that come to mind right now, but there are probably some more.

CG: What about at the full proposal level?

BH: Changing from dissertation level to the full level, there was one round where we funded Kanthak and Woon to do that type of competitive study looking at women vs. men competing, and at the same time we funded Jennifer Lawless to do work on socialization of high school girls and college women to see how that socialization affected willingness to run for office. Getting at same topic from different directions, which is always fun to do.

CG: Does the NSF like to fund a lot of studies about one topic and try to look at the topic in different ways?

BH: Not necessarily, that was just an instance where that occurred. The nice thing about NSF, especially in standing programs like political science, is that we do not have identified areas that we want to fund. We might take the opportunity to fund something in underdeveloped areas where we think it might be nice to put some money there (1) to help with the development and (2) to show that NSF can be a source of support for this type of research. But unlike a lot of mission agencies like the Department of Agriculture or DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), we don't have themes saying that we will fund this type of research this year.

That allows us to fund what we think is the best research, allows flexibility for identifying areas we think are important, or making sure our portfolio is spread across different types of institutions, or different geographic areas, different investigators, and even different subject matter. I like to make sure – and this happens naturally over time – that we are divided between American, IR, comparative evenly. Especially once you take ANES out. That's a big chunk, but over time about 1/3 of our funding goes out to each of those subfields.

CG: Speaking of other funding institutions, what else is different about the way NSF funds proposals compared to other grant-giving organizations? You've listed one difference, what about others?

BH: Right, one difference is that we do not have these focused "have to be in this area" requirements. The other main difference is that program officers are given more leeway at NSF than other institutions. For example, at NIH the panels come in and rank the proposals, and then the program officer takes proposals from the top going down until they run out of money. At NSF we are hired partially because of our expertise. And so we are asked to use our judgment in deciding what gets funded. When our panels meet, we tell the panels: "You are making recommendations to us. We will use those recommendations to make our decisions. Usually we will follow those recommendations, but there may be times when we do not." For instance, if we think there might have been problems with the discussion, or if we think the panel missed something (which rarely occurs), or if we think other factors should be taken into account. Overall, the program officers play more of an active role in deciding what is going to be funded at NSF, and that is a major difference between the NSF and other funding sources.

CG: Does that lead to systematically different things being funded? What is the outcome of that difference?

BH: It's a check on the system to make sure that different types of things are funded. If we look on the proposal rating board and see that all the highest rated proposals are IR proposals, it could be because this round we have a group of really great IR proposals, and the other proposals weren't that good. That has happened. But it could have been because the IR folks on the panel were very good at getting the IR proposals higher up. Some panelists are much more persuasive and forceful than others. So at NSF we watch for those sorts of things, and this difference provides a check to make sure there's funding balance, that members of underrepresented groups are represented, and that sort of thing.

We also take into account some other things when deciding between two proposals that are ranked equally, very close together. I've mentioned accounting for underrepresented groups. Another thing we'll do is account for institution. If two proposals are close together and one's from Harvard and one from Cal State Chico, we are more likely to fund the Cal State Chico proposal because if somebody from Cal State Chico gets NSF money, people at that institution and similar institutions are going to wake up. Now, we will never pluck something out that's substandard to fund. But it's another broader impact, so to speak, when we have two proposals of equal quality and need a deciding factor.

"A way to think about it: it is really hard to get funded if you are doing 'normal science.' What turns me off a proposal is if I can look at it and say that this is a project you could do on your own time without NSF support."

CG: What about a proposal gets you excited about funding it?

BH: The first thing is that the proposal is very solidly theoretically grounded. I don't care what the theory is, I just care that it's a good theory. For example, I grew up in a rational choice/game theoretic academic setting in graduate school. But I don't look for that approach in a proposal. I look for a solid proposal asking interesting questions and proposing answering those interesting questions. I love when the proposal does something innovative with theory, testing, or both. I like when proposals are using new data sources, or using new methods, or perhaps using tools that have been applied elsewhere but using them where they haven't been used before.

A way to think about it: it is really hard to get funded if you are doing "normal science." What turns me off a proposal is if I can look at it and say that this is a project you could do on your own time without NSF support. For example, at one time we were asked by our Assistant Director why we don't see proposals that use ANES data. And we replied that we'd only expect to see ANES proposals coming in if they are doing something very innovatively methodologically, and need support for that. Otherwise, we expect faculty to do that type of work on their own.

The other thing that gets me excited is the broader impact area. As you know, NSF reviews both for intellectual merit and for broader impacts. For example, proposals that really involve undergraduates in the research in innovative ways, or even involving graduate students. It's normal to involve graduate students, but using the graduate students in innovative ways. Another great broader impact is doing outreach to the community. The community could be the political science community, but it could also be the broader community. For example, a proposal that has impacts locally or nationally or internationally. We like to see those sorts of things.

Overall, we get excited for innovative proposals. That doesn't necessarily mean the proposal will be funded, but we like to see a unique way of looking at the world. We are told that it's okay to take risks and that not everything has to pay off in our portfolio. We don't want a portfolio that says nothing in the end, but it's okay to take a risk on a PI or a project that might have a big impact. We did that recently with a reward looking at the way women veterans are treated in VA hospitals. That came at a very good time for that type of research, but also it was a qualitative piece that came up with a very interesting case selection mechanism and a very interesting theory. And it was more broad in impact than women in VA hospitals by virtue of the theory.

CG: You mentioned that you really like to see innovative methods. What innovative methods have you seen lately that are not typically used?

BH: I'm starting to see more sophisticated GIS methods, coming out of geography. Not the simple thing we used to see where people would flash a map on the screen. That can tell you things, but people are using estimation procedures that really take into account the problems of spatial correlations, and doing it in interesting ways. That is the biggest innovation recently.

We've also seen a lot of field experiments. Field experiments are all the rage, so I wouldn't call that new at this point. But we are seeing nice ways to go about choosing treatment vs. non-treatment. And then some very nice natural experiments, taking advantage of situations that create good comparisons.

CG: What about innovative methods within legislative politics? Are GIS methods and field experiments being used there also?

BH: I haven't seen GIS methods applied to legislative politics, but I have seen some field experiments dealing with responses to constituents, and those are very interesting. I've seen some proposals dealing with legislative elections and parliamentary elections where people have done interesting things to look at the effects of vote monitoring and how different types of tools have more effect than others. For example, at least one PI worked with a telephone provider in Africa to create a program that allows people to take pictures of the tote boards outside election places in a particular state, and could send them to a central location. And if people knew this was happening, how was that affecting things. So we're seeing some of that, but not a lot in the legislative setting.

CG: You've also mentioned that you really like to see innovative theories. What are some of the innovative theories now being applied to legislative politics?

BH: That is one of the problems – we're not seeing that from legislative proposals right now. The only place in legislative politics we might be seeing innovative theories is on the topic of representation of women and the impact women have on parliamentary settings. Even there I wouldn't say the theoretical perspective is that innovative. This might be unfair of me to say, and it probably is, but I think the legislative field has kind of stalled, to a certain extent, and is not moving as it once was.

CG: So there's a big opportunity for innovative theories in legislative politics?

BH: There really is! Really is a good opportunity. I've been here for about 11 years, and I cannot remember a full proposal from a senior person that was specifically on Congress that we funded. I know of proposals we funded that were on comparative legislative topics. For example, Mona Lena Krook on women's representation and Lanny Martin on representation in European legislatures, but there has not been a lot. And it's been disappointing. There's an opportunity for proposals using innovative theories, and that's what we want people to think about. It's not that we won't fund this work – we'd like to fund that work, but we haven't seen it being proposed. Give us the opportunity.

CG: We've talked a little bit about intellectual merit and broader impacts. In discussions I've had with colleagues, there is some confusion about what exactly NSF is looking for with "broader impact" and "intellectual merit". In the legislative politics arena, what traits does NSF primarily look for with broader impacts and with intellectual merit?

BH: With intellectual merit, we're really thinking about how the research advance the basic science. Our basic understanding of how legislatures work and how legislators behave, and that might go out further than the legislative setting. That's what we're looking for there.

With regards to broader impacts, that's much broader. We're thinking about things like training, undergraduate/graduate opportunities where they are picking up tools and skills they wouldn't get elsewhere. We're thinking about the information the research creates being informative to policymakers about how they can better do their jobs. With regards to Congress that can be hard to do sometimes, but people like Steve Smith have testified in Congress on Congressional Organization, as just one example. And if things like that happen due to research, we would be thrilled.

Another example of broader impacts is when the information the study provides may not inform Congress but informs about other legislatures around the world. For example, in reforming their legislative rules or thinking about incentives they've set up for their members, or even in the establishment of new legislatures. And you can think about it in any legislative setting - the national legislative setting, the provincial setting, states in the United States. And a lot of what we talk about with regards to US Congress and other legislatures is really about organizations that make decisions and that make decisions in a particular way. And the research could inform those types of settings, too.

CG: So it can be very broad when you think about a legislature as a group of people making decisions. You can consider the rules, composition, and incentives of that group.

BH: Right, that's right. Those are the types of things we look for with broader impacts: how the basic science in the proposal impacts society writ large. We focus more on intellectual merit for dissertations than for full proposals, because we expect dissertation students not to quite be there on impacts, whereas faculty might be. But over time we'll find that broader impacts are going to become more important. If nothing else, at least communicating results to a broader audience to tell them why it was important that the research was conducted. Some research has a more natural set of broader impacts than others, and for some it is harder to stretch more broadly, and we realize that. But we want to see people take that seriously and take that step.

CG: Are there any other types of broader impact arguments that NSF does find apply most to legislative politics? We've talked about underrepresented groups, undergraduate training, other legislative contexts and decision-making contexts. Anything else?

BH: Unique data sources also help. NSF requires that any collected data be shared at some point. So when we see data that is interesting and can be used in a number of ways by other studies, that also helps.

CG: If NSF received two proposals of equal quality overall, but one was a bit stronger on intellectual merit and the other on broader impact, which proposal do you think would receive funding?

BH: The funding will probably fall to proposal with better intellectual merit. Because, at the end of the day, we are a basic science funding institution. But what are the broader impacts? And how far apart are they when comparing them on intellectual merit? As the two get closer together with intellectual merit, there might be broader impacts that would push me. For example, working with undergraduates, especially undergraduates from underrepresented groups. And there are other factors that we've talked about: PIs, institutions, areas of study, etc...that make a difference when deciding between two equally strong proposals.

But that is a reasonable question, because when it comes to full proposals, year after year, we can never fund everything we want to fund. We just don't have the money. But for dissertations, we fund all the dissertations that we believe should be funded. They're cheaper, and they can have more of an impact because it really helps the graduate student get that research going. It puts them in a place they're unlikely to be without that dissertation funding.

> "[W]e fund all the dissertations that we believe should be funded...because it really helps the graduate student get that research going."

CG: Are there common characteristics among scholars that receive NSF grants compared to those who do not? For instance, in legislative politics, non-academic work experience on the Hill, or pre-existing ties to an organization that they propose to work with?

BH: I don't think there's anything systematic that way. I can think of examples and counterexamples on both sides. It really comes down to that theoretical perspective. If the person who has been on the Hill comes in with solid theoretical proposal, that's great. They might be more believable when we say that they will interview staff members for their project, because they have the connections to really do it. Or they could really get the time of Members of Congress, that type of thing. I've seen a number of ways where some scholars can access data that other people haven't accessed. And they can credibly say that they can get more of this data because of who they are and who they have connections with.

CG: So there is some instrumental reasons those ties can help you, but NSF isn't looking at that as a deciding factor for funding.

BH: Right. When we review proposals, it is not double blind. The reviewers know who has written the proposal. And one of the things they are asked to explicitly think about is if they think the proposer can do the research. And sometimes that's a feasibility concern. Having known access to things like we mentioned prior is a way to answer that concern. This doesn't come from a proposal, but you could envision a proposal to do work in a French archive from someone who doesn't speak or read French at all. That's going to be a huge problem, and they're not going to get anywhere. In that case, the proposer just doesn't have the tools.

CG: Sometimes scholars are involved in solo projects, and sometimes we are involved in projects along with a non-academic organization (like an NGO). Does the NSF have any preference about funding projects from a solo researcher or with a non-academic partner?

BH: No difference. Some people have the idea that to get an NSF grant, a junior person needs to work with a senior person. When asked about that, my answer is that you only need a senior person on the proposal if it helps you do the work. It's the same thing with NGOs. If working with the NGO provides you access or resources in some way, or if you are piggybacking on their activities to do the research, then you should have them as a partner. For example, I have seen scholars partner with certain agencies very effectively. Catholic Relief Services was given a contract to setup civic education courses in Afghanistan. A scholar by the name of Dana Burde was able to get on the ground floor with them, and they allowed her to design a matched sample, since they couldn't administer the whole area at one time. She had that opportunity that she would not have had that if not for working with a partner. But that doesn't mean you have to partner, it depends on the question you are asking.

CG: Switching topics to more about the NSF application process, how are the NSF reviewers and panels for a given proposal chosen? Is the process different for different NSF grants? For example, the dissertation grant compared to the full proposal grant?

BH: Yes, they are different for dissertation grants vs. full-proposal grants. For the full proposals, we assign six ad hoc reviewers to each one, plus two panelists. The ad hoc is chosen by myself and my fellow program officer. Sometimes faculty members will suggest reviewers on their proposals, and we'll use a couple names from their list. And we also have rotators always bringing in new names. When I say rotator I mean that I am permanent at NSF, and the other person in my program is somebody who comes from faculty to work with us for 2 years and then returns. That's how we choose the ad hoc reviewers. And of course we use our knowledge, lots of sources, and web searches, that type of thing. We don't use the bibliographies that much. Sometimes people load up the bibliography thinking that we'll choose someone from that.

For panelists, on regular full proposal panel, we have 12-14 panelists. They serve a four panel term (two years, meeting twice each year). The panelists rotate off in staggered terms, and they represent different areas where we see a lot of proposals. We'll have a couple IR people – one in conflict, and one in IPE, but both who work fairly broadly so they can also do things in other areas. We'll have several comparativists, and some doing comparative/IR so they can help with IR reviews if we have more IR proposals. We'll have comparativists that work in institutions, behavior, developing world, developed world – we cover all bases. And it's the same with American politics. Then we have a couple Methods people who also work on other things.

We're looking for really good broad scholars for the panel. And those are people who my fellow program officer and I select, with recommendations from other people. For dissertations the process is a little bit different. We don't usually get ad hoc reviews. We're not assigning to anybody outside the panel. There's a special dissertation panel we convene, separate from regular, with fifteen-sixteen members. And each dissertation is assigned to 3 panelists. Those are the people who consider the proposals.

For both panels, the panel will put a proposal into one of four categories: (1) highly competitive+, (2) highly competitive, (3) competitive, (4) not competitive. The different categories mean different things. If a panelist puts a proposal in the highly competitive+ category, it is a truly great proposal, and the research could almost be transformative in nature. Highly competitive means it's a really good proposal. Competitive means it's a good and we're not worried funding it, but we're not excited about it. And not competitive means no, don't fund this proposal.

The dissertation panels make those recommendations for dissertation and full panels for the full proposals. They do it at different dates and times. The panels meet physically in a room and discuss those proposals for a few days.

CG: How rare are the highly competitive+ proposals? Are they so rare that you don't even see those every funding cycle, or are there always a couple of those?

BH: Most cycles we'll see one or two highly competitive+, but some cycles we won't. After the Coburn amendment, which restricted what we could fund, after that disappeared, it took awhile for people to remember we were still out there. The first couple cycles after that amendment, the quality of the proposals were down. We didn't see the highly competitive+ proposals then. But usually one or two show up there. But money is the same whether it's highly competitive+ or others.

CG: Which categories get funded. Do competitive proposals still get funded?

BH: Competitive still gets funded, but it depends on the program and the competition. For the dissertation competition, I commit us to funding, unless we run out of money somehow, everything competitive or higher. As I mentioned before, the cost isn't as high and it has such an impact on the graduate student research. The panel knows this. They know that if they put a proposal in competitive, it means I am funding it. Unless I look at it and say "no". But that rarely happens. And if it does happen, it's because we just didn't have the expertise on the panel. In that case, I might send to an outside reviewer.

With full proposals, if the proposal is put in highly competitive we find a way to fund you. If a proposal is in that category, it's a great proposal that should be funded. At the end of panel, we have what we call "sober second thoughts," where we go back and review all of the proposals, and if something is in highly competitive and there is a flaw, we are going to hear about it at that point and downgrade it to competitive. So we try to fund all of those highly competitive proposals. But – and this is important – if the proposal's budget is out of whack, we won't use that as a reason to decline the proposal. We will contact the PI and say "we cannot fund that much money, but we can fund this much money, how much can you do with this?"

When we get to the competitive rating, it depends on how far the money goes. On average, we leave $3-4 million worth of fundable proposals on the table each year because we don't have the money for them. And given that average reward is $375,000, that's a good number of proposals. People can come back and apply again, and I encourage people to come back to us no matter which category they are in. We only hold it against you if you totally ignore what the reviewers said the last time. Well, NSF won't hold it against you but I guarantee those reviewers will.

CG: I'd like to ask about specific sections of the proposals now. What should a proposer ask to use grant money for, and what should you not ask for? For example, summer salary, course reduction/buyout, conference money, travel money?

BH: For full proposal, we expect faculty to take summer salary. We'd like it to be confined to 1/9th per calendar year per faculty member on the grant. For buyouts of courses, we rarely do that. But if there's a good reason we'll consider it. A good reason might be that the proposer will be doing fieldwork and have to be in the field during the academic year. Another reason can be if the proposer is at an institution where it's almost impossible to do research because of teaching load, and that teaching load can vary. I've seen people with a 2/2 load make a good argument as to why it needs to be reduced. They're at small liberal arts colleges that expect a lot more from a 2/2 load than people at, say, Illinois would expect.

Otherwise, I'd say proposers should ask for what they need to do the research. If equipment is needed, ask for it. If you need people to help you conduct experiments, ask for it. If you need graduate students, ask for it. If you need to hire a survey firm, ask for it. If you need somebody to help you translate things, ask for it. If you need a car to get where you are going, within certain grounds, ask for it. I remember funding a graduate student at Indiana who was doing fieldwork in Uganda and needed transportation to get to rural villages to do field work. Originally the grant asked to rent a car with a driver, but after spending more time in field she realized she could buy a car and hire a driver for much cheaper. She asked if she could use the money that way, and I said if it's okay with your OSP, it's okay with us.

One of the only things that you can't do with the money is alcohol. You might laugh, but let's say we're giving funding to run a workshop. One of the things you'd expect from a workshop is to provide food. And a lot of times people might want to serve alcohol at that end of day meal, but we can't do it.

We also cannot have anything connected to gambling. And you might again think, "where would I do that?" But imagine if, instead of giving small incentive payments for participation, you put participants' names in a lottery, and the winner gets X dollars". NSF doesn't like that.

Also, money cannot be used in any way, shape, or form to impact federal elections.

Asking for these items do not disqualify a proposal. We will contact the proposer and say that we cannot do that, but we can do other things. There might be an opportunity to rebudget.

CG: What do scholars need to consider in the data management section of their proposal?

BH: Oh, that is a good question. In the data management part of the proposal, proposers need to think about when they'll release the data and where they will put that data. For my purposes, and this is becoming more general NSF purposes, we want the data put some place more established than a scholar's website. For example, if UofI has a place people can archive the data and it can be accessed by other people, that's fine. That's a place where it will be around for a long time. If the faculty member leaves the institution, the data doesn't disappear. ICPSR is great. Dataverse is great. QDR (Qualitative Data Repository) at Syracuse is great. There are a lot of examples people can use; we want it to be stored somewhere it will be around for a long time. So we're not going to have data disappearing because somebody has moved institutions or is no longer in academia.

Timing I realize is more sensitive, and we try to be reasonable with timing. What we would like, optimally, is if you say "the data will be released on whichever date comes first: any time I publish something I'll make that part of the data publicly available, or 1-2 years after the project I will make it all available regardless of publications." We want people to have cuts at their own data first, that's very important. Otherwise why collect the data in the first place. At the same time, we don't want the data sequestered forever because you didn't publish on all of it. And because you didn't publish on it you never let it go, because someday you want to publish on it.

We're really into data access. We would definitely like to see that for quantitative data and we'd like to see something similar for qualitative data. And that's writ large. We realize that the qualitative folks are still working to figure out what they're going to do with data access, but we would like to see something put up publicly. I know there are arguments about replicability, but we're not even looking at it from that perspective. We just want people to be able to look at it and be informed by it.

I was really happy the other day to see Charles Stewart posting his data to Dataverse. Charles is great with sharing data. When I think of people in the legislative area who have been great, and I'm sure I'm missing people, the three people who automatically come to mind: Poole and Rosenthal, for data and code and programs, and Charles Stewart. The great thing that Charles has done is taken the data that's been on his MIT site for a long time and has guaranteed it will be out there for a longer time. It's now not just on his website. We know it's going to be out there. In a sense, Poole and Rosenthal have done that by including Jeff Lewis, who I should have mentioned. They have passed the mantle to Jeff, and there's a separate nominate site hosted by Jeff at UCLA.

We are looking for more than putting data up on a private site, and we don't want to see people saying that they won't share data because of anonymity concerns. There are clever ways to deal with that. If that were the standard for releasing data, we would never release any ANES data. With the full ANES data set, you can find out a lot of information we don't want people to have. So we don't release the full data with GPS coordinates and other things. There are ways to anonymize the data so that you can make it available.

Another thing I should mention: if we get a proposal that we want to fund and the data management plan is unsatisfactory, we will contact the PI to say that we need a revised plan. And we'll tell the proposer generally what we would like them to do. We don't tell them exactly what to do, because we don't care if they use Dataverse vs. ICPSR vs. Github. But they have to do something like that. Intellectual merit and broader impacts have to be there, but we can negotiate the budget and can negotiate the data management plan.

CG: Those are all the questions I had. Is there anything else you think people in Legislative Politics will want to know about NSF funding?

BH: An important thing for anybody is that if you have a question, get a hold of the program officer. It usually helps to email instead of call. That gives a chance to think about it. If you don't get an answer, and that occasionally happens, email us again. Give us a week, and then send us a reminder. There are times when things just get past us. There are times of year when we get lots and lots of emails. If we are unresponsive, tell us that and I guarantee we will get back to you.

This especially happens when similar sorts of questions are asked. We'll think we answered both questions if we answered one of them. The other thing to help yourself in getting a reply is to send the email to me and cc to my fellow program officer, or send the email to him and cc me, so both sets of eyes see it. We get together at the beginning of each day to make sure all those things got taken care of. But make sure you contact us. If you are trying to figure out whether your proposal is appropriate, or if you've gotten a decline and want to know what you should do, feel free to contact us.

The other thing is that if you have an award and are out there doing something, and have a question about what you can do with the money, contact us! We are more than willing to talk with you about that. This is a grant, not a contract, and we realize things change.

CG: Thank you very much for speaking with me, Brian.

BH: You are welcome, my pleasure.

Funding for Legislative Studies

Shane Martin
University of Essex

In your view, what makes applications successful?

Grant capture is becoming undoubtedly more challenging in more and more countries. Winning a grant is part science, part art, and part luck. In writing or reviewing grant proposals, I tend to focus on 5 key dimensions: what, how, why, why now and why the applicant. Although almost universal, the relative importance of any one of these dimensions will vary depending on the particular funding agency and grant call.

The 'what' refers to what you are proposing to study. This obviously includes a well formulated research question. The 'bigger' the question in terms of theoretical, normative and empirical significance, the better. Don't assume people have any interest in your dependent variable – you must sell it, and to an audience within legislative studies and beyond legislative studies. The 'how' refers to the methodology – both the framework and the 'nuts and bolts' of empirical research. Here, it is good to be as detailed as possible – legislative scholars know what they are going to study, describing how can often be the trickier part. But it is important to have a credible implementation plan. The 'why' may have two components: an academic and a real-world/policy component. Identifying a gap in an academic literature used to be a good way to get funded; now, given the proliferation of political science research over the last few decades, any 'gap' claim is likely to raise alarm bells – if nobody studied this, they probably did not study it for a practical reason. So it is important to explain why your research question is a significant one and why the topic deserves funding. Some countries and funding agencies now place greater focus on policy impact. In Britain, for example, research worthy of funding is often expected to have societal benefits, and you may need to identify real-world stakeholders who would benefit from the research. For legislative scholars, these can include politicians, parties, legislative officials, those engaged in political reform and even voters. Love it or hate it, translational research is probably coming to a funding agency near you, if it has not already arrived. "Why now" refers to the timeliness of your proposal. If the funding body has to choose between multiple high quality projects, all equally fundable, having an argument as to why this is the right time to undertake this research may give you a competitive advantage. Finally, 'why the applicant' refers to the demonstrated capacity of the applicant to conduct the research. Why am I worth investing in over the many other applicants? This, of course, is where the applicant's CV may become important.

> "Don't assume people have any interest in your dependent variable - you must sell it..."

Is there anything particularly relevant for grants that involve legislative research?

I think so. First, applicants need to be realistic about their research strategy given that they are dealing with political elites and institutions that are quasi-secretive. Writing "I plan to conduct an observational study of the House leadership" or "I expect to have a high response rate in my survey of legislators" likely lacks credibility. We are dealing with semi-open institutions; but beyond the formal openness (for example, the plenary record), most scholars will find it difficult to obtain new primary data, at least on the better studies cases such as the US and UK. So it comes back to the 'how are you going to answer your research question.' Second, transparency in research data is very important in the profession; but privacy and anonymity can often be very important for legislators, their staff and legislative officials. Therefore, in grant proposals it is very important to set out ethical considerations around legislative research, particularly if the research involves (traditional or experimental) surveys, or interviews. What happens to the confessions of politicians in a taped interview could be very consequential!

Speaking of CVs, what can young scholars do to put themselves in a position to be competitive for these types of grants?

Develop a great research agenda - in other words a question that has the potential to teach us something new and interesting – and in particular something that will interest political scientists outside of legislative studies. My working benchmark for this is simple: Would the argument, if empirically validated, interest the author of an advanced undergraduate textbook to add a new sentence.

Beyond this, ensure you have the skills necessary to undertake the research. For comparatists, this may include having spent time in the region you want to study as well as language proficiency. Money follows money – so try to get as many small local grants on your CV as possible. The advantage of existing 'wins' is that reviewers, like voters, employ shortcuts, so if they see that you have a dissertation award or travel prize from your University they will know that someone already has thought it worthwhile to invest in you.

You mentioned the role of luck. Can you elaborate?

We are scientists, and the idea that luck should influence something as significant as grant decision making may seem inappropriate and even sad. Indeed, the idea of being 'unlucky' can be particularly annoying for graduate students and junior faculty. Good funding agencies have procedures to minimise the impact of 'luck,' but as with any peer review process, much can depend on who you get as a reviewer. First, reviewers vary in their general attitude. Some see it as their task to maximise the number of awards in their particular field. I see one of my duties as being to champion legislative studies, for example. This does not mean accepting poor applications. Rather, some reviewers understand the need to be appropriately excited and positive in their review and assessment, and to give context as to why this application from legislative studies is particularly earthshattering. Second, some scholars are simply more predisposed to being positive than others. Any negative comments can torpedo an application, as can a low grade evaluation. Finally, a lot depends on the congruence of preferences in terms of methodology and paradigm between a reviewer and the application. So who you happen to have review your application matters. The peer review process is less than perfect!

Any final advice?

Don't underestimate the importance of selling your research agenda. Write your proposal from the starting assumption that nobody cares about your dependent variable. It is very easy for researchers at any career stage to forget that the world does not revolve around their research agenda. I study legislative organization and for a long time thought that legislative organization was the natural core of political science – remember the good old days when "Why committees?" seemed to dominate not just legislative studies but arguably American political science more generally. Why wouldn't someone be interested in legislative committees, I asked myself? Falling into this trap causes us to undersell our research – and sell (but not oversell) our research agenda is something we all have to do. Yes, legislative scholars have to appeal to other members of the sub-discipline, but a reviewer may also hale from other parts of political science. Thus, be mindful of your audience: the grant proposal should appeal to a fellow specialist, but it should equally appeal to someone who knows little about, or cares little for, legislative studies.

Seeking and Securing Grants in Legislative Research: An Interview with Carol Mershon

Carolyn Coberly
University of Virginia
with
Carol Mershon
University of Virginia

CC: Today I am interviewing Carol Mershon, the Hugh S. and Winifred Cumming Chair in Politics here at the University of Virginia. Carol has a wealth of expertise on grants, for she has served two years as Program Director at the National Science Foundation and has received three NSF awards, three Fulbright grants, and a Social Science Research Council Fellowship, among others. I am interviewing her today about tips for success in grant applications.

CC: What are the key elements of a grant application on legislative research?

CM: I will start with a successful grant application in general and then modify that template for legislative research. The first key factor is a clear statement of the research question as situated in the relevant bodies of scholarship. This has two parts: identifying your overarching research question unmistakably, and showing that your question addresses an ongoing debate or an unresolved set of questions in the literature. By situating the question in available research, you begin to demonstrate the value added of your project.

Then you want to outline how you will tackle the question analytically – what your theoretical argument is, what hypotheses it entails and what rival hypotheses accompany it. Here you can ground your discussion in the research you have already cited. This should allow you to move naturally to an outline of your research design to test the hypotheses. If at all possible you should conduct a pilot carrying out a portion of the research design. The pilot demonstrates the intellectual promise of the project as a whole and the feasibility of implementing the research design. You should present a brief timeline for the implementation of your research design and lay out expected findings as informed by your pilot. You should conclude the proposal by restating the project's intellectual contributions on the basis of the full proposal. Depending on the funding agency, you should discuss the broad societal impacts. Demonstrating the wider relevance of your project is particularly important for the National Science Foundation (NSF).

When we think about legislative research specifically, a grant proposal is strengthened when the project in some way invokes big questions. If you are working on democracies, this means discussing democratic representation and democratic accountability. If you are not working on democratic regimes, you want to discuss what policy-making power and influence the legislature wields or what sort of interactions rulers have with the legislature in efforts to maintain their power.

> "The pilot demonstrates the intellecutal promise of the project as a whole and the feasibility of implementing the research design."

These big normative questions are the kinds of questions that make us care about legislatures. Legislatures are pillars of democratic political life because they translate citizens' preferences into public policy. Tying the workings of the legislative party system to themes of representation and accountability can be a way to get funding agencies interested in the project. We need to sell our projects in broad terms: we are learning about democratic accountability, we are learning about representation, and we are learning about how and how much citizen preferences find their way into policy.

CC: You mentioned the potential response to our research by legislators and their staff – are there any political landmines or cautions scholars should be aware of when writing grant applications?

CM: Yes and no. No, because it is the intellectual merit of your project that must be absolutely uppermost in your mind. You should focus on what you believe is the most pressing and intriguing research question. And then in a sense yes, but the yes carries a "yes, but." The granting agencies that are most subject to political pressure because they receive funding from Congress are NSF, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. (The Department of Defense is another story, less relevant to those conducting legislative research.) I know the most about NSF, for I served there as a rotator Program Director for two years. Program Directors in political science and the other social sciences are very alert to what might be and actually has been flagged as politically problematic by Congressional aides. They at times work with principal investigators (PIs) on slight rewordings – slight – in the publicly available abstracts and very rarely in the title of a project so that these are less likely to catch the eye of a Congressional aide and raise questions. The project does not change – you do exactly what you want – but the packaging might be altered slightly.

CC: Can you provide an example of a project that came under Congressional criticism?

CM: One that leaps to mind is the list of the 100 most wasteful uses of federal money published annually by a member of Congress. In the past, the American National Election Survey (ANES) appeared repeatedly on this list. Of course, the ANES is routinely viewed as the "gold standard" of survey-based election studies, it is the largest single investment made by NSF's political science program, and it has inspired and guided many other national election studies around the world. The ANES forms the bedrock of what we know about U.S. electoral behavior. The fact that the ANES has met criticism from a small subset of elected officials does nothing to diminish its enormous contributions to the study of American politics, electoral behavior, political science and the social sciences more broadly.

CC: Are there other sensitivities specific to legislative research scholars should bear in mind?

CM: Interviews with legislators are frequently used in research, but a standard criticism is that legislators, as incumbents who are facing reelection, have incentives to dissimulate. There are now innovative methods for asking sensitive questions, and we as PIs need to think about the capacity of legislators to be self-serving, anticipate concerns about this from reviewers, and show reviewers that any such concerns will be addressed. PIs should always consider the extent to which preferences expressed by respondents are sincere versus strategic, or the possibility that responses might reflect party preferences and not the individual's preferences.

CC: You have mentioned the NSF several times. Do you have any specific recommendations for applications for NSF funding?

CM: The generic template that I gave for research proposals very much applies for NSF funding. Beyond that, I have three observations. First, do keep in mind that the NSF awards different types of grants. One major distinction is that some grants support work on dissertations and some awards fund the research of established scholars. For researchers with Ph.D. in hand, we can also distinguish grants in terms of timing. For instance, rapid-response grants (labeled RAPID) go through an accelerated review process so that the PI or PIs (it can be a collaborative project) can investigate a fast-breaking, unanticipated phenomenon. Exploratory, early-stage research proposals on potentially transformative ideas (EAGER proposals) also are submitted to accelerated review. On these and other categories of grants, the NSF Grant Proposal Guide gives rich detail. Another set of grants, offering five years of funding, is targeted to extremely promising junior faculty: the Faculty Early-Career Development (CAREER) Program. Key resources may be found at the NSF CAREER portal.

Second, NSF funds a relatively low percentage of PIs on the PIs' first try. The key thing here is to revise and resubmit, as with journal submissions. You will get useful comments from referees as part of the NSF review process, so pay attention to the comments and do revise and resubmit. Also feel free to email the Program Directors for a phone appointment to discuss your revisions, as informed by the referees' comments. Keep your email brief and use it to lay the basis for your phone consultation. For instance, write a one-paragraph blurb that reflects your new thinking on your project and list three or four questions that you have from the reviews. Your phone appointment will very likely be quite productive when you set the agenda in that way.

Last, emailing Program Directors for phone appointments when you have a new project is also good idea. Working with prospective PIs is a major part of the Program Director's job, after all. Do not make a cold call, but instead set up a phone appointment and use your brief email strategically to set the agenda in ways you see as beneficial to your research plans. If you wish, for an entirely new project, it is fine to include a one-page attachment summarizing the project.

CC: How should scholars approach the Data Management Plan?

CM: The NSF has developed succinct guidelines describing what the Data Management Plan (DMP) is designed to do and the types of information that need to be included. Useful information on this, specific to the social sciences, can be found at the NSF's website. Also keep in mind that the University of Michigan, specifically ICPSR, maintains a website on guidelines for the DMP and provides examples of plans. UC-San Diego has another webpage that provides examples, as might your own university.

CC: What recommendations do you have on budget proposals? Are there specific items we should – or should not – ask for?

CM: Conference money and travel are routine. Be prepared to say that your request is to go beyond the subsidy that you receive in your Department. Course reduction buyout is rare but should be pursued. The frequency of course reduction or buyout varies across grants and also across professional situations. For example, consider a faculty member teaching a 3-3 load in a small teaching college versus one at a research university teaching 2-1. It is extremely difficult to motivate a course reduction buyout for someone already teaching 2-1. On the other hand, with a 3-3 load, the course reduction could be motivated: that is a very heavy load, precluding much progress in research. For summer salary, ask for it and ask for what you genuinely need. Whoever is in charge of making decisions on the grant – the program directors at NSF or their analogs at other agencies – may trim your budget, given their overall view of investments to be made, but always name the financial support you believe you need to achieve your research goals, and then justify that request systematically.

The budget justification is valuable "real estate," with prose linking your needs to the intellectual goals of the project. The timeline in your research proposal is a way of turning your research design into a set of activities – what happens when – and the budget justification should refer back to your specific activities.

Finally, you can also ask for research assistants, both graduate and undergraduate. This budgetary request allows you to demonstrate the ways your research is integrated with and advances your teaching. Keep in mind that the integration of research, on the one hand, and teaching and training, on the other, forms part of the NSF broader impacts review criterion. Thus, you can shine on this criterion at the same time that you help achieve your research goals. For graduate student research assistants, you are training tomorrow's colleagues, and for undergraduates, you are contributing to their education in novel ways. And of course, you are learning to delegate work that you would otherwise have to do yourself and helping expand funding for the graduate program in your department. Depending on the details, part of graduate student tuition or fringe benefits can be paid – there are many different ways to fund a grad student through a grant.

CC: Are there any current trends that donors and grant-making organizations are focused on right now? What substantive issues or methodologies are most likely to get funding?

CM: I think different funding entities would provide different answers. For NSF, there is a clear emphasis on needing to demonstrate that the project in some way generates broader societal benefits. A recent NSF brochure illustrates how researchers can communicate the societal benefits of their work; prospective PIs can draw inspiration here. More generally, the trends in political science follow the growth in research in certain areas. So there is interest in the operation of ostensibly democratic institutions like legislatures and legislative parties within authoritarian regimes and also in the representation of long under-represented groups. These themes have generated interest at funding agencies, but I think that is only because there is a growth of research in these areas – you see more proposals along those lines. Thinking methodologically, there is more experimental and quasi-experimental work now then there was 20 years ago or even 15 years ago. So that is a yes and no answer.

CC: Finally, what are the top three things you recommend we avoid in a research proposal?

CM: First, don't leave it unclear as to what is going to be funded with this particular request in the context of your larger project. Second, don't leave unclear what the value added of the project is, that is, what the original contribution is. And third, don't waste precious real estate. Every single element of the proposal needs to build and clinch the case: fund me, here's why. Proposals can sometimes wander, but wandering leads to squandering the relatively limited space available to make your case. As a related point, there's no reason to write a proposal that is shorter than required – you should exploit the real estate to the maximum. If you can offload something onto a budget justification, do that, and use the main text to further develop the intellectual meat and merit of the proposal. Exploit every opportunity available to you – including every piece of the allotted proposal length – to convince referees and those who make funding decisions that yours is an intellectually exciting, innovative, and feasible project that deserves support.

Applying for Federal Grant Funding: An Interview with Sophia Jordán Wallace

Matthew J. Lacombe
Northwestern University
with
Sophia Jordán Wallace
University of Washington

MJL: Today I'm interviewing Sophia J. Wallace, who is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Professor Wallace has served as an NSF Political Science program grant review panel member. We're going to speak about how to develop competitive proposals for federal funding. Sophia, could you begin by describing the general NSF review process?

SJW: There is a call for proposals from the NSF unit and a formal due date. After that due date there is an internal process to identify appropriate external reviewers for each proposal in a way that is similar to a journal review process. A proposal typically then goes out for external review, which includes two or three or sometimes even four lengthy reviews by people who are specialists in the area – so, again, very similar to a journal review. These reviewers are not generalists who may, for example, critique just methodology [due to a lack of familiarity with the topic]. They're people who substantively know about the topic. Then there is a process by which proposals are reviewed by the broader NSF panel, which is composed of a number of political scientists across different areas of the field. The panel does additional internal reviews. Then the panel meets and discusses proposals. So, in sum, there are both internal and external reviews, and then proposals are discussed by the panel as a whole when they meet in person. Finally, recommendations are made to the program directors who read the panel summaries, the reviews, and make final decisions. It's a very lengthy, detailed, and robust process, which explains why it takes a while to hear the outcome of a grant submission.

MJL: What tips do you have for scholars who plan to apply for NSF funds?

SJW: One really useful tip is to be in contact with the program directors for the specific proposal that you're applying for. Political scientists apply to calls from numerous NSF programs – political science, law and social sciences, sociology, methods-related calls, interdisciplinary calls, etc. – depending on what is their research topic. All the programs have different program directors who work in conjunction with one another. It is quite useful to reach out to them before you submit a proposal to get a sense of how to make your proposal more competitive. I think they are really helpful at giving people important directions about ways to make their proposals potentially more attractive, robust, and well-developed.

> "One really useful tip is to be in contact with the program directors for the specific proposal that you're applying for."

MJL: In general, what makes proposals successful?

SJW: I think that – and this sounds like a very basic suggestion but I notice it's not always followed – it's really important to actually include all of the required components listed in the proposal guidelines. In particular, the most overlooked component is the requirement that proposals include a discussion of the broader impacts of the project. Sometimes people address this very briefly or not at all. There's actually a whole section of the reviews that require reviewers to analyze the broader impacts of the proposal, so if people have not done that portion, it's very difficult for reviewers to recommend the proposal. They do sometimes come up with broader impacts that the author didn't think of, but it is much easier if authors lay out the broader impacts themselves.

MJL: Staying on that topic, could you say a bit more about the broader impacts section? What advice might you give scholars who feel that their project lacks substantial non-academic impacts?

SJW: The broader impacts section should be focused on the substantive impacts of the findings in terms of their ability to, for example, potentially influence a policy debate or the decisions of political elites. Sometimes we actually impose much narrower standards on ourselves as researchers about broader impacts than we should. I think many projects have broader impacts, but that we tend to view our own impact very narrowly. I think this does researchers a disservice. A lot of research does actually have these things, but we are less used to talking about our work or writing about it in those ways – it's just not typically how we're trained to think about our research. We self-constrain too much and we can do more than we think we can. If we're thinking about legislative politics specifically, there's plenty of work that is done that would help actually decrease polarization in Congress, for example, or help representatives be more responsive to their constituents, or help constituents increase the likelihood of their member being responsive to them. There are a number of ways that the substantive findings of legislative politics could have broader impacts, particularly if certain community groups or political elites may be able to use the information they produce in useful ways. Yet researchers often seem reluctant to speculate about potential broader impacts.

MJL: What other elements of the proposal are key to success?

SJW: Successful proposals usually contain some kind of pilot data or initial analysis to help the theorization of the project, as well as demonstrate some kind of empirical relationship. Not necessarily a large one, but some collection of initial data or analysis. Additionally, sometimes proposals read as almost solely a data collection project and there is no theoretical framework. That can often cause a proposal to not be successful, especially if the data won't eventually be used by lots of people in the discipline. The ANES, for example, is used by so many researchers, that projects like it are funded because they are a public data good. But a lot of the narrower data collection projects done by an individual scholar or a small group of scholars are not going to be widely used in the same way. This makes it really important to motivate the project theoretically. The strongest proposals usually have a substantial amount of theory to motivate the empirical portion of the project. Last thing: it's also important to do the data management section, which is another proponent people tend to sometimes not complete, or do a very cursory version of it.

MJL: Staying on that topic, could you say a bit more about the data management section?

SJW: There are some useful examples online posted by a number of different universities' grant units. The format of these plans is pretty standard across disciplines. Stanford, for example, has some general examples posted on their grant office's site. Typically the best plans are very specific about where the data will be stored, the plan for data release, when and how long it will take for the data to be released publicly (and how people will access it). There should also be some description about the storage process; typically the most robust plans have a storage proposal that is separate from individuals, meaning that the data is not stored on a person's personal website (which might, at some point, not be renewed). More institutionalized mechanisms for storing data – such as the ICPSR repository – are typically viewed the strongest, and other options would potentially be things like dataverses that are dedicated to big projects. Also, if there's going to be limitations on others' access to data, there should be discussion of why that is the case. In general there has to be discussion of how the files are going to be stored, the format in which the data is going to be made available, and which aspects exactly are going to be made available to others. And the plan doesn't have to be very long – a page is usually good, or two pages at the absolute most.

> "American politics proposals are not underrepresented, but proposals specifically on legislative institutions are."

MJL: Could you say a bit about who should apply for NSF grants and when – in terms of the stage of their careers or the stage of their projects – they should apply?

SJW: Well, one thing I'd like to note is that not enough people are applying! I actually have not seen a lot of proposals that were specifically on legislative institutions. There were very few, actually. American politics proposals are not underrepresented, but proposals specifically on legislative institutions are. I do not know why that is, but I do think that in general the number of proposals rises and falls based on whatever the government restrictions on funding are at a given point in time. Announcements have been made, for example, saying that all new projects must be related to either national security or the economy; that announcement caused declines in submissions across lots of sections. However, even though those restrictions ended, some people are still concerned about the state of federal funding. Creating a proposal is a significant time investment and I think a lot of people have been led away by concerns over whether funding will disappear. But people should apply because the NSF is always interested in getting more applications, particularly from women and people of color (who are typically underrepresented in most sections), and is open to a wide range of subjects. People tend to apply most frequently from research institutions, but the political science unit is committed to diversifying grant recipients across different types of institutions. In terms of the stage of the project at which people should apply, it's definitely not the most useful to apply once all the data has been collected, because then it is unclear what research activities the grant will be supporting.

MJL: What should scholars request in their budgets?

SJW: Direct research costs – where you're paying for research assistance, to access archives, or to run a survey – are ideal. People also include things like summer salary, although they vary widely in how much summer salary they ask for. Most proposals often include two summer months total – one for each year of the project for each person – but I've seen requests that ask for considerable more summer salary than this. Typically, those proposals are not as successful if those sorts of requests make up the bulk of the budget. People usually also request funds to present the data or to pay for things like transcription. Sometimes people budget for time in the academic year to work on the project – such as a buyout for their courses. It all depends on the scope of the project. Thinking about legislative institutions in particular: for example, imagine you were going to go do field work somewhere and do interviews with members of a legislature for a number of months – well, one could easily budget for travel expenses. If a researcher is downloading stuff from congress.gov and trying to organize it into different types of datasets, then the research costs might be something like research assistants. People also do budget to fund a graduate student (and funding for a student can also be discussed in the broader impacts section, by noting that you'll be training students or members of underrepresented groups who might gain skills through the RA jobs). Sometimes people also even budget for things like the construction of a new statistical program, such as to do a new kind of data manipulation. People are very creative with their budgets. In sum, budgets typically include: direct research costs, money to present the research (not just at academic conferences but to the public for broader impacts reasons), and some summer salary. It is important to properly justify your requests as necessary to execute the research in the budget justification document. If you cannot justify a request as part of executing the research, then you probably should not include it.

MJL: Are there any political concerns that potential applicants should be aware of? Put differently, is it difficult for the panel to recommend federal funding for projects that might generate findings that make political elites uncomfortable?

SJW: It does not appear to be a big political concern. There is lots of research that could be controversial, but a well-crafted research project that studies those issues would not be discounted because of what they are studying. There have been lots of studies funded that, for example, look at the responsiveness of members of Congress to constituents that haven't always drawn positive conclusions about elite behavior. There have been federally funded studies that look at inequality and representation, or the role of money or corruption or election fraud or political scandals – projects that you can imagine that some political elites might not like the findings. Aside from political issues, there are ethical debates going on in the field in regards to, for instance, field experiments that we do on legislators or voting registrars. Part of reviewing proposals is asking whether it's ethically responsible; you have to ask, do they have really negative, real life impacts that are not justifiable for the pursuit of research? For example, in an international context, if you think violence could ensue from a potential experimental manipulation, then that would obviously be quite concerning.

MJL: Any parting thoughts?

SJW: More people should submit proposals. Proposals are mostly submitted by senior people and people from research institutions, so I would especially encourage junior people and people from non-research institutions to apply. Lastly, it is perfectly acceptable to submit applications where you collaborate with people from other institutions – there are lots of successful collaborative research proposals.

NSF Dissertation Improvement Grants

Chris W. Bonneau
University of Pittsburgh

Obtaining a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (DDIG) from the National Science Foundation (NSF) is something that can benefit all graduate students. Not only does it provide funding for you to conduct your dissertation research, but it also sends a credible signal to others about the scientific merits of your project and its potential. To receive a DDIG, your proposal will be evaluated and discussed by 15 scholars, representing each subfield of political science. It is highly competitive and only the best proposals are funded. In this essay, I will walk through some of the things that will enhance the likelihood of you receiving a DDIG.

A brief bit of background on my qualifications for dispensing the below tips (especially since I am not a scholar of legislatures). I have served on both the Law and Social Sciences Panel and the Political Science Dissertation Panel. Combined, I have served on ten separate panels and evaluated more than 500 proposals. I hasten to add that what I write below is based on both what I have observed and also my personal preferences; other scholars who have served on these panels might emphasize different factors.

I also want to give you a brief overview of the procedure that occurs once you submit a DDIG. Each proposal is assigned to 3 panelists for review; the panelists review the proposal and write a review. These reviews are single-blind: we can see the author and advisor of the proposal. Panelists are unable to see how the other people rated the proposal (or what they said) until their review is submitted. At the panel, these reviewers present the proposal's strengths and weaknesses to the rest of the panel members, who have access to both the reviews and the proposal. The panel then discusses the proposal and makes a recommendation by consensus. It is important to note that all recommendations by the panel are just that: recommendations. The final decision on funding is made by the program officers. Indeed, panelists don't even know what is (or is not) funded unless we check the NSF website months later.

What Makes Applications Successful

Much of the general advice in this section (like, have a clear research question; have a clear plan; make sure your writing doesn't have too much jargon, etc.) you can get from your advisor or others in your department. There are two things I see a lot that can make it more difficult for your proposal to be rated highly. First, the NSF has two clear criteria for all proposals: intellectual merit and broader impacts. In fact, all of us are explicitly asked to review proposals using these criteria. So, minimally, your proposal should have sections that are clearly marked, "Intellectual Merit" and "Broader Impacts." If I (or other reviewers) have to search for these, that is not good for your chances of success. Also, please don't "mail in" the broader impacts. All political science research has broader impacts; sometimes you just have to think a little harder about what they are. That is effort well spent.

> "[D]on't 'mail in' the broader impacts. All political science research has broader impacts; sometimes you have to think a little harder about what they are. That is effort well spent."

Second, please keep in mind that many of the panelists are not going to be legislative politics experts. Indeed, you are almost certain to have at least one non-legislative politics person as one of the primary reviewers on your proposal. So, be clear exactly what your contribution is and how it is important. Think about this like submitting a manuscript to AJPS or JOP instead of LSQ. In the latter, you can afford to assume a common base of knowledge on certain things; in the former, you need to be much more explicit about how your research fits into the literature. You can't just say something is important; you have to show it. Don't assume we know what the "Hastert Rule" is; explain it clearly.

Topical Concerns

In general, there are no topics that are off-limits. However, there are some things I have noticed give those at NSF pause. For example, candidate emergence studies. While many of these studies represent excellent science, one can see how members of Congress might be a little sensitive about government funding being used to recruit people to run against them. That isn't to say these studies ought not be done. However, in an age where the funding of social science has been heavily politicized, the NSF might be more hesitant to fund studies like this.

That being said, I have not noticed this as an issue on panels, except for a passing comment or two. What has been an issue are research ethics and societal harms. I have reviewed multiple proposals that have not adequately considered the ethical ramifications of the research. Simply stating that you have received approval from your Institutional Review Board (IRB) is not enough; IRB's are not designed to evaluate and consider broader harms beyond the individuals in your study. So, where applicable, I would encourage you to demonstrate that you have thought about any ethical issues and why you think your study mitigates them. This is especially true where your study is manipulating (or attempting to manipulate) behavior such that people might behave in ways they otherwise would not absent your study.

What Should You Ask For

This is easy: ask for everything you need for your research (you will have to defend this in the budget justification) and nothing you don't need. I would say to be ambitious. If you are doing a survey, do it right and get a representative sample. It's possible you won't get everything you ask for and you'll have to retool, but unless the budget is way out of whack (and with a budget cap that doesn't happen a lot), it isn't an issue.

Along these lines, though, some panelists (myself included) are attracted to the "value" of the proposal. What I mean by this is that if you can show me that for a small investment of $20,000 I can get state legislative voting data over a 50-year period, this is going to elevate your proposal. Why? Because you are going to be providing a dataset that will be heavily used and cited by the scholarly community. If we give you $15,000 and you are going to be able to interview 300 legislators in a country that has never been studied before (and you have good theoretical reasons for doing so), that's a big return on the investment. The bigger the return on the investment, the more likely you are to get funded.

Data Management Plan

Every proposal needs to have a data management plan (DMP). Panelists simply evaluate whether the plan is adequate or not. If the DMP is inadequate, you will likely to asked to revise it. What makes a DMP inadequate? It is NSF policy that all data collected with their money be made publicly available "within a reasonable time." So, your DMP must say when the data will be made available. It also must state how the data will be made available. Posting data on personal websites is highly discouraged, since these are not permanent and can disappear when you change institutions, etc. Best practices involve archiving the data on a repository like ICPSR or Dataverse. Your DMP should state exactly what will be archived and where it will be archived.

Summing Up

I hope this gives you some insight into the DDIG process as well as the factors that can make your proposal stronger. When writing the proposal, you should read the Grant Proposal Guide and feel free to contact the Program Officers with any questions you have; they are happy to help you with the proposal. You also should work closely with your advisor and other members of your committee in writing the proposal (go through multiple drafts, etc.). Finally, plan to be done 2-3 weeks before the deadline. Your institution will have a series of bureaucratic hoops you need to go through and this can take more time than one might think. It is not reasonable to submit your grant proposal to your institution the day before the deadline and expect that it will be processed on time.

In my time serving on panels, I have seen good proposals not get funded, but it is very rare that a proposal I thought was deficient did receive funding. Thus, if your DDIG proposal is not funded by NSF, this does not mean it is a poor proposal or there is something fatally flawed about it; it just wasn't one of the most competitive proposals in that cycle and funding is limited. If your DDIG is successfully funded, then you should look at this is a signal that independent scholars judged your proposal to be one of the very best they saw that year. You should celebrate this accomplishment. Take the night off and relax. And then get to work.

Grants for Research on Congress: A Funder's Perspective

Frank H. Mackaman
Dirksen Congressional Center

The Congressional Research Grants (CRGs) Program

The Dirksen Congressional Center awarded its first grant to support research about the U.S. Congress in 1978. Since then The Center has distributed $1,032,221 to support 462 research projects. Together with grants to underwrite conferences and publications, The Center has invested nearly $2 million in basic research about the people's branch.

Among institutions that hold congressional collections, The Center is not unique in providing grants to support research. But we are unusual in that The Center does not require recipients to use The Center's congressional collections. This policy means that our pool of applicants may be larger than those for other congressional archives. In 2016, we received 67 applications—the high water mark came in 2011 with 109 proposals. The five-year average stands at 82. We generally award from 12 to 14 grants each year totaling about $35,000.

What makes for a successful application for a CRG?

My first piece of advice to applicants is to make sure you qualify for consideration. Our program is open to individuals with a serious interest in studying Congress. Political scientists, historians, biographers, scholars of public administration or American studies, and journalists are among those eligible. The Center encourages graduate students who have successfully defended their dissertation prospectus to apply and awards a significant portion of the funds for dissertation research. Applicants must be U.S. citizens who reside in the United States. The awards program does not fund undergraduate or pre-Ph.D. study. Research teams of two or more individuals are eligible. Organizations are not eligible. No institutional overhead or indirect costs may be claimed against a Congressional Research Grant. Unfortunately, we reject a handful of applications each grant cycle simply because they do not meet the eligibility criteria; in 2016, two of the 67 proposals failed the eligibility requirements.

Second, and this should be obvious, the proposed research should focus on Congress. The Center's primary interest is to fund the study of the leadership, both House and Senate. Beyond that we will consider almost any Congress-related topic. We have found over the years, however, that applicants are very ingenious in trying to shoehorn Congress into the story of another subject, usually a public policy, which is the real subject of their interest. My advice: Congress cannot be tangential to the study of some other topic.

> "My advice: Congress cannot be tangential to the study of some other topic."

Third, be aware of what a grant will pay for and what it will not. Generally speaking, a CRG can cover almost any aspect of a qualified research project, such as travel to conduct research, duplication of research material, purchase of data sets, and costs of clerical, secretarial, research, or transcription assistance. This list is merely illustrative, but specifically *excluded* from funding are the purchase of equipment, tuition support, salary support for the principal investigator(s), indirect costs or institutional overhead, travel to professional meetings, and publication subsidies (which we consider on a case-by-case basis and fund from another source).

Fourth, pay attention to how you write the project description, which is the single most important part of our application. Observe the word limit. Avoid jargon. On that score, I will resist the temptation to call out a particular discipline, but some of the writing is simply indecipherable to the non-specialist, which suggests that the project itself will have limited impact or appeal.

Finally, double-check that your proposal contains all the required elements. Here we run into problems with the reference letter that is required for graduate student applicants. We disqualified two proposals in 2016 because the faculty members did not submit that letter despite our efforts to contact them.

How are Proposals Evaluated?

The Center uses a nine-member screening committee comprised of congressional scholars from different disciplines to evaluate proposals. Each member is free to use her or his own criteria to arrive at their recommendations. By way of illustration, I have included the rubric used by one of the panelists (Figure 1).

The Example of 2016

In 2016, The Center received 63 qualified proposals requesting a total of $202,581. Ph.D. candidates numbered 25. Political science produced 29 applications; history followed with 20; and the balance came from public administration, communications, international studies, or journalism. There are, of course, myriad ways to categorize the subject matter, and any such scheme is arbitrary. But one approach is to use a simple four-part categorization, the "Four Ps of Congress." Recognizing that these arbitrary categories are not mutually exclusive, 22 (35%) proposals dealt with some aspect of Place[1], 17 (27%) with Process[2], 14 (22%) with People [3], and 10 (16%) with Product[4].

At the end of the multi-stage evaluation process. The Center awarded 11 grants totaling $34,195. The entire list of CRG recipients is posted online with additional information about the program.

The Association of Centers for the Study of Congress

Let me take this opportunity to call attention to the "Grants for Research in Congressional Collections" sponsored by the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress. Scholars do not apply for these funds, however. Instead, member institutions of the association may nominate researchers who have used their congressional collections for post-research awards of up to $500.

Using Archival Resources

In terms of advice to political scientists about using archival resources, I can do no better than to cite "Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research" published by the Society of American Archivists and posted online. It covers such topics as the types of archives, planning a visit to an archival repository, typical usage guidelines, and notes of copyright and other restrictions. This information will prepare both the novice and experienced researcher for a visit to The Dirksen Congressional Center or any other repository.

Notes

1. Place in the sense of context. What happens in Congress does not occur in a vacuum. Elements of "place" include broad historical trends (e.g., demographics), events, the partisan landscape, the nature of representation and the nation's issue agenda, relationships between Congress and other branches of government, the characteristics of a member's district or state, the public's perception of Congress, and the Capitol Hill campus itself.

2. Much of the scholarship on Congress deals with processes broadly defined. Elements of "process" include con-

Figure 1: Example Dirksen Congressional Grant Evaluation Rubric

Factor	Contemporary	Historical
Elections (e.g., candidate recruitment, campaign finance, campaign tactics, voter behavior, apportionment, electoral outcomes)	2	3
Leaders and parties (e.g., elected leaders, leadership activities, party organizations, party continuity and change)	1	1
Committees (e.g., evolution of committee system, assignment process, committee leadership, policy making in committee, staff, committee reform)	2	2
Rules and procedures (e.g., law-making processes, congressional reform how a bill becomes law)	2	2
Decision making (e.g., types of decisions, determinants of voting, bargaining)	1	3
Congress as a collection of members/staff (e.g., collective characteristics, cultural norms and folkways)	1	1
Congress as a representative institution (e.g., constituent communications, public perceptions of Congress, impact of technology, demography)	1	2
Congress and the president	2	2
Congress and the courts	3	3
Congress and interest groups	2	3
Congress as policy-maker (e.g., case studies)	2	3
Congressional biography	3	1
Congressional history--general (e.g., Constitutional underpinnings, institutional evolution)	NA	2

Key: 1 = High priority; 2 = Middle priority; 3 = Low priority. "Historical" is defined as pre-1945.

gressional elections, Constitutional provisions and the structure of Congress, congressional powers, committees, the law-making process, bicameralism, the partisan divisions in both chambers, floor procedures and voting, and reform efforts.

3. Congress is more than a constitutional entity and a set of processes. It is a community, too. The people who serve and work there matter. Elements of "people" include senators and representatives, congressional leaders as a subset of the membership, political organizations, staff, and factors that influence member behavior (e.g., decision-making) such as constituents, lobbyists and interest groups, media, and cultural norms.

4. Eventually, what Congress does or does not do has an impact, a result. To borrow a concept from corporate America, Congress produces a product. Elements of "product" include the laws and public policies created by legislative action, congressional oversight of public policy, and the ability of Congress to draw attention to issues. The failure to act is also a product.

Strategies for Obtaining and Managing Research Grants: An Interview with Fabio Wasserfallen

Charla Waeiss
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
with
Fabio Wasserfallen
Salzburg Center of European Union Studies

CW: The development of research is a dynamic process and grants afford scholars opportunities to expand or enhance a project in ways that may not have been feasible at its initial conception. How did the "EMU Choices" project evolve as you were seeking grants? How has the project grown or changed since obtaining the Horizon 2020 grant?

Prof. Wasserfallen: Our case may be a bit special. Because the grant call had some specific objectives, our project is not necessarily representative of most research projects of this magnitude. However, it may point to some interesting aspects, because we wrote the application in a very centralized way. We started with a basic framework for the project geared at addressing issues posed in the grant call. We were intentional to incorporate them very clearly into our approach to the grant call. This approach, developing our research in response to the key objectives of the Horizon 2020 grant call, made it easier to be concise and clear about our project and tailor it to the appropriate audience.

Of course, as the project grows and develops, we have to strike a balance continuously between researchers having the freedom to develop their own agendas but also keeping them to the guidelines and the intent of the project overall. It has proven advantageous for us that we can always return to our grant proposal as guidelines for the core purpose of our project. Therefore, even within each phase of the project we have had a very clear understanding of when we want people to stick closely to the project proposal and when we can allow for more freedom. This also helped with the development of the project as researchers knew that, while the initial stages of the project required a strict adherence to the project outline, later stages would afford them more freedom in the way in which they conducted their research. That is a balance that we must consistently strike, but we were conscious to implement that in the beginning and try to leverage that in the management of the project.

CW: Some projects are more politically feasible for funding than others. In your experience, are there types of projects or components of a specific project that may make it difficult to obtain funding? If so, how does this shape the scope or goals of a project?

Prof. Wasserfallen: Generally speaking, I recommend having a clear understanding of the goals of the funding agency with regard to the grant call to which you apply. Additionally, if you are too technical and stick to academic jargon in your proposal, you will lose your audience. Furthermore, you need to make a compelling argument as to why money should be spent on your project. In the case of a specific grant call like the one we addressed from Horizon 2020, it was important that the reviewers understood that our research would give answers to the questions raised by the call.

With regard to political feasibility, we were conscious to ensure that our project included a diverse set of research. This is important along a number of dimensions, particularly scholars' time in academia, location across multiple universities, gender, and generally a diversity of perspectives. Allowing for a heterogeneity of perspectives is especially important so that it does not look as though you and some colleagues are pursuing research in which few others would take interest. It also incorporates an interdisciplinary approach that grant agencies prefer in large projects. These are things that researchers must be prepared to do; if you do not consider them or would prefer not to do them, it may feel like a compromise to your project. However, if you develop your project with these aspects in mind, it will not feel like a hindrance; instead, it will be an asset.

CW: Beyond the general grant writing advice that scholars can (and should) get from talking to colleagues or going to grant writing workshops, we would like to know about things that are particularly relevant for grants that involve governmental research. What makes applications successful for Horizon 2020 grants?

Prof. Wasserfallen: A key point is to understand what your project seeks to do and play on the strengths of your approach. For example, our project encompasses both a political science aspect and a legal one. In our proposal, we made clear why our project was good from both approaches and how the perspectives complemented one another. I believe that helped make our project successful in terms of obtaining the grant and I think the reviewers appreciated it, because we were not trying to bring together disparate research agendas; instead, our project had a clear core that was covered in the proposal. I think it makes sense to develop your project based on the grant call, especially when it comes to projects with a broad scope. Therefore, it is important to follow along with grant calls and find one that fits you, your research interests, and your abilities.

CW: What can young scholars do to put themselves in a position to be competitive for these types of grants?

Prof. Wasserfallen: For young scholars, it is very important that you team up with other researchers. Coordinating a project with a more experienced colleague can help, not only in terms of demonstrating diversity to the grant committee, but also in terms of teaming up with people who have complementary skills. It is helpful to find people who have experience working on large projects, as their way of thinking and approaching problems will be different from those who are less experienced. With these types of projects, it is also important to consider what you can contribute as a researcher and the qualities and expertise that you need other scholars to address. That way, you build a team where the skills are complementary rather than redundant.

CW: Relatedly, large grants like Horizon 2020 can also enable an expansive research project. As a coordinator for EMU Choices, what strategies would you recommend for managing a sizeable interdisciplinary project in concert with other scholars and political actors?

On these set of points, be sure to hire the right people for project management. While we use managing and project software, at the end of the day, having a great project manager, like we do, is key here. He brings both academic and management skills, which was important to us when filling his position. Understanding what you expect each position to contribute within project management and the selection of researchers for your project is important. I do not think project objectives or measures could make up for a lack of management skills among project members.

I also think transparency is important when hiring people for positions within a project. You need to be clear about why you hired project members and the specific objectives you expect them to meet within the project (e.g. data collection, communicating with the grant commission, or project management). That not only helps ensure that members will be more likely to meet the objectives you give them, but it can also help keep them satisfied with their role in the project, because they are presumably doing something they are interested in as well as what you hired them for.

In terms of coordinating a project of this magnitude, I recommend using your position as coordinator when requiring the deliverables from members of your project. That way, it is clear that you are not requiring such things, but merely ensuring that your project fulfills its broader obligations as required by the grant agency. It also makes it easier for you as an academic, because it is clear that you are not trying to impose your research agenda on other members of the project and instead you are trying to meet the promises made to the grant agency in a timely and coherent manner.

CW: It sounds like you were intentional and coherent in your management of the project from the beginning. Would you say that you came into this project with that management experience or did you learn from your experienced colleagues and your project manager?

Part of it was luck and part of it was intent. We did make mistakes and we were not able to account for all of the technicalities we encountered. Therefore, I think continuously reflecting on issues you face as you develop the project and as it progresses can help you anticipate future obstacles. While I do not think it is reasonable to expect that you can account for any possible problem that could come up within the lifetime of a project, it is important to understand how you intend to execute key decisions, like choosing project members and allocating the grant. For any other obstacles, I recommend being cognizant of the fact that issues will happen, and while you cannot plan for all of them, you should have some reasonable expectations about how you might adapt to certain challenges. Of course, sometimes you also need a bit of luck that things work out and when you need change them, you find a way to do it. Reflecting on the progress of a project, how you have overcome obstacles, and expecting that you will need to be flexible and adapt components of your project as it progresses can help the project run smoothly.

Studying Representation with the Cooperative Congressional Election Study: An Interview with Jason Casellas

Markie McBrayer
University of Houston
with
Jason Casellas
University of Houston

YouGov/Polimetrix administers the CCES every year to a nationally stratified sample of approximately 50,000 individuals. Half of the survey is comprised of Common Content where all 50,000 respondents complete the same questions. The other half of the survey consists of Team Content where scholars and researchers can field their own custom questions using a national sample.

MM: How did you first get involved with the CCES?

JC: I have been involved with the CCES on three separate occasions, the first being in 2011. That year, I fielded questions with my coauthor Sophia J. Wallace, on attitudes about representation in a survey fielded in Texas. In that pilot study, there were some really interesting findings about minority attitudes toward representation. Yet, this data surveyed only Texas residents, and we really wanted to see if these findings held nationally. The following year, an opportunity came through the University of Texas at Austin (where I was teaching at the time) to include questions in the national-sample CCES. A team of scholars at UT-Austin worked together to submit Team Content to the 2012 CCES, which was generously funded by the University of Texas and the Irma Rangel Public Policy Institute. By 2016, I was here at the University of Houston, and another opportunity to include questions in that year's CCES module presented itself. A team of about ten political scientists here collaborated to defray the costs and submitted a module for the University.

MM: What is the timing for getting involved before the study fields?

JC: For the 2016 survey, Elizabeth Salazar from the CCES sent out a call for Team Content in early March. Shortly thereafter, a group of faculty came together, pooling resources, and expressed interest in contributing original content to that year's questionnaire. By the end of April, our team had received a copy of the Common Content in order to ensure there would be no duplication between our original survey questions and the Common Content. We drafted and finalized questions in June, as the deadline for submission was July 1st. The survey was then fielded around the time of the general election.

MM: What are the benefits of this sample for representation-focused research?

JC: Much of the literature on representation tends to focus on elites: roll-call votes, bill sponsorships and co-sponsorships. But there's very little research asking respondents their views on representation. CCES was an affordable and systematic way to ascertain how voters view and value representation, specifically minority voters. For instance, in the 2012 module, we asked participants how important it was to have co-ethnic representatives in their districts. Black and Latino respondents thought co-ethnic representation to be very important, especially relative to Latino Republicans who found it to be less important. In the 2016 CCES, we asked similar questions with more of an eye toward policy, specifically questions at the intersection of descriptive representation, criminal justice policy, and immigration policy.

MM: What are the costs (monetary and other) of this sample?

JC: To include questions in CCES' 2016 survey, the team collaborated funds and collected $12,500, more or less, in order to interview approximately 1,000 individuals. In terms of time, these funds allowed us 10 minutes in the pre-election survey and 5 minutes in the post-election survey. Each colleague in the University of Houston team contributed a set amount of money and divided up the questions based on how much money was contributed. The Department, chaired by Susan Scarrow, also contributed some funds to make the module possible. Many thanks to my colleagues Scott Clifford and Justin Kirkland for spearheading this endeavor and also allowing others in the department, including some of our graduate students, to participate.

In terms of administrative costs, the CCES uses a unique point system for determining how much each question would take in terms of time. When you originally purchase inclusion in the survey, the money you contribute is directly proportional to the points you receive. More funds buys you more time and therefore more points. Each question uses a certain number of points. Longer questions with videos or more complex response options use more points than short questions with only two response options. For some members of the team not already familiar with this, the point system was a bit complex at first, but it does become intuitive.

Additionally, our team at the University of Houston is comprised of political scientists with many different, but at times overlapping, interests. As a consequence, we needed to work closely together to ensure that we weren't submitting similar questions as someone else on the team, but also that we were all submitting questions with similar formatting and response options. For instance, the survey questions needed similar scales across the Team Content. It can be confusing for respondents to have one question with a 3-point agree-disagree scale and then the next be a 7-point scale. Our point person, Scott Clifford, handled the administrative coordination among team members to make sure that the module was cohesive and and flowed well consistent with sound survey research techniques.

MM: What do you think about the types of projects or research questions the CCES could be most useful for?

JC: The CCES is obviously very useful for scholars interested in public opinion more broadly, but as I've discovered, scholars of legislative politics should continue to use surveys such as the CCES to ascertain the views of constituents on topics ranging from opinions about their representatives to opinions about redistricting and other institutional procedures. While simple survey experiments work well in the CCES, it might be cost prohibitive to include videos in a CCES module since this takes up too much time on the survey. Otherwise, the CCES is a great survey to field questions because of its relatively low cost and high quality.

Getting Started with Archival Research

Charles J. Finocchiaro
University of South Carolina

Archives contain a great deal of valuable material for political scientists. Whether the researcher is looking for rich contextual material or potential sources for quantitative data (or perhaps both!), many untapped volumes of papers housed within myriad archival collections offer a promising avenue of study. In much the same way that Charles Stewart (2001), in an earlier edition of this newsletter, described historical research as an arena with a great deal of low-hanging fruit, I believe archival and manuscript collections present the legislative politics subfield with a wealth of opportunities waiting to be exploited. Moreover, with increasing digitization and online availability, more collections are available remotely every year.

On a parallel track, online subscription collections are broadening the path to materials that were once relegated mostly to library shelves and microform. In recent years, in the U.S. context with which I am most familiar, we have seen for example digitization and full-text search capacity of the Congressional Record and its predecessors, fingertip access to the Serial Set, and millions of newspaper pages spanning time and geographic space. These sources alongside the depth of available archival collections are revolutionizing the work of historically-oriented scholars. The sorts of collections on which I focus in this article involve primarily two types of materials: (a) the papers of individuals and organizations donated to various institutions and (b) the official records of government bodies deposited in state and federal archives. Both are obviously of great value, although they offer somewhat different windows into political history.[1]

In what follows I will share some experiences and best practices learned in my own work, particularly from an ongoing book project on the late 19th and early 20th century Congress, about how best to access and utilize manuscript collections housed at various institutions. In the course of my research, I have visited massive government repositories such as the National Archives, large and highly professional university and state archives (such as the Carl Albert Center at the University of Oklahoma, the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming, and the Idaho and Kansas State Archives), and some rather small yet illuminating local archives a bit more off the beaten path. While I do not claim to have even most of the answers as to how best to conduct archival work, I have learned quite a bit over the past few years of travel—nearly all of it due to the tremendously helpful assistance of the dedicated individuals who make these archives tick.

The Search for New Data

The discovery of trunks belonging to former House Speaker Cannon in a long-neglected Capitol closet and the eventual transfer of the contents to the National Archives is probably what first caught my eye many years ago (Lawrence, Maltzman, and Wahlbeck 2001). I later visited the Archives on my own and began poking around in committee records—mostly dealing with House committees and some executive agency records. While my earliest forays were motivated admittedly by attempts to identify things I could "count" and analyze statistically (Frisch and Kelly 2003), my work began to take on an equally important qualitative component as well. There was a richness and first-person quality that came alive as I delved into the historical Congress. Yet I also realized rather quickly that the amount of material available required economizing and careful advance planning.

Archivists and Finding Aids

While I have at times simply stumbled upon something that was not identified in a catalog or finding aid, the vast majority of my work would not have been possible were it not for a good deal of preparation well before visiting the archive. On this point, archivists and finding aids are your indispensable friends! Increasingly, most institutions make the finding aids—which vary considerably in length and detail—for the specific collections they hold available online. If not, it's always worth a call or an email to determine if the staff can send you a copy in advance. This helps because it allows you to identify exactly what might be of interest to you in the collection—for instance, a range of time or subject area for a legislator's correspondence, the (non-)existence of constituency service and appointment records, etc.—and to notify the archivist in advance to express that interest.

Identifying what you need before your visit also allows the staff to have your material ready when you arrive, and makes possible some informational queries if you need them. Much of this depends on the extent of available staffing. But archivists love to see the collections they preserve being used, and I've found them to be tremendously helpful with both logistics and questions. While much of what you need to find out, at least at a general level, often appears in published and (more often) unpublished finding aids, there is no substitute for an experienced archivist. They're also busy people, so the more lead time you can give, the better. And again, make sure they know you are coming, and ask what you can do in advance by way of preparation so that you can hit the ground running when you arrive.

Planning Your Visit

Every archive I have visited has a slightly different feel. While in some cases you will find yourself in a large reading room with many other researchers, in other cases you will be the only person in the room that was just unlocked for your use. Before you get there, make sure you know the hours and rules. You'll rarely be able to bring much with you—usually a laptop, often a camera, and possibly a pencil and blank paper—so it's important to know simple things like storage options (rental lockers are common), copying and reproduction policies, etc. Over time, I have transitioned from taking extensive notes in the archive to primarily using my time on the ground to capture relevant documents on a digital camera. Note that not all archives allow reproduction—it often depends on their own regulations as well as the age and scope of the collections you are using. But for me, an ideal situation is one in which I know which boxes and folders I plan to use and can then set up my table-top camera mount and quickly capture what I plan to go back home and process more extensively. This was especially true in those instances when I knew I needed most of six or eight large volumes of a ledger and could spend the bulk of a day or two sitting more comfortably capturing those materials using the tripod than I could do with my iPhone. But if you are venturing out on your first archival visit, the iPhone will probably work just fine. In either case, make sure you've disabled the flash though!

Having internet search capacity is also important. I've often found myself needing a bit more information about someone, identifying committee assignments, and so forth. So for me, a setup in which I have access to my laptop and camera is ideal. It's also critical to find a reliable way to source the material you are collecting. To do so, I ordinarily include in my photo stream the archival request form for the material I am using (both to find it again later if necessary as well as to cite it fully in my work), a photo of the archive box, and a photo of the folder. Each of these is labeled according to the collection, so it makes life much easier later for reference purposes if you collect it exhaustively on the spot.

Funding Your Trip

Many archives have some limited resources available to support your use of their holdings. Based on my experience, this is particularly true of state-level archives and institutions with a notable set of holdings. Both the Carl Albert Center at Oklahoma and the American Heritage Center at Wyoming, for example, offer travel grants for visiting scholars. In other cases, an archive might help with or waive some reproduction costs if you note your status as an academic researcher. Funding opportunities are typically advertised prominently on the institution's website, but it is always worth asking the archivists as you are in touch with them about a potential visit. In some instances, an institution will have periodic deadlines while in others applications are accepted on a rolling basis; a letter of reference or two is often required; and you will absolutely need to be able to spell out very clearly both the subject and scope of your project as well as how the materials in the collections will be of use to you. It is imperative to have a good handle on the holdings when you apply—ideally noting the specific boxes (and even folders) in a collection that you plan to use. This shows that you have already carefully reviewed the finding aids and likely been in touch with an archivist.

Conclusion

The time I've spent in archival collections have been among the most enjoyable of my career. There is just something unique about holding those materials in your hand—perhaps akin to being a close observer in a living legislature. Moreover, I have gleaned insights into numerous facets of legislative politics that I likely would have missed, or played down, had I not delved as deeply into the existing records. If you've not visited an archive, the next time you are in Washington or your state capitol, why not poke around for an afternoon and see what you might find?

Note

1. Three NSF-funded projects demonstrate the varied uses to which personal and official papers may be applied. In his work on congressional whip counts, C. Lawrence Evans makes extensive use of the papers of party leaders housed in diverse collections across the country. The Senate Elections Data Project 1871-1913 of Wendy Schiller and Charles Stewart draws on the official journals of state legislatures during the era of indirect Senate election, while Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Charles Campisano, Matthew Hitt, and Kevin Scott tap the holdings of the National Archives for their project on the Senate Blue Slip.

References

Frisch, Scott A., and Sean Q. Kelly. 2003. "Don't Have the Data? Make Them Up! Congressional Archives as Untapped Data Sources." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36(2): 221-224.

Lawrence, Eric D., Forrest Maltzman, and Paul J. Wahlbeck. 2001. "The Politics of Speaker Cannon's Committee Assignments." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 551-562.

Stewart, Charles, III. 2001. "Picking Fruit in the Historical Garden." Extension of Remarks, in *APSA Legislative Studies Section Newsletter* 24 (July).

DCinbox – Capturing Every Congressional Constituent E-newsletter from 2009 Onwards

Lindsey Cormack
Stevens Institute of Technology

A New Database of E-newsletters

Since October 2009, every official e-newsletter sent from every sitting Representative and Senator to his or her constituents has been archived and made available for public analysis at www.dcinbox.com. This database currently contains over 80,000 official communications and grows each day.

While the Library of Congress reportedly stores hard copy versions of each of these electronic communications in the same way that franked physical pieces of mail are maintained, the federal government does not maintain an electronic archive of these sorts of official communications. In 2009, out of a desire to preserve these original e-documents for future political scientists, historians, and interested citizens I began the task of creating an online, searchable, continuously updated database of every official e-newsletter sent from a sitting member of Congress to their constituents.

There is a long history of research on political communication, but given the varied and oftentimes non-recorded nature of political communication, these studies tend to make more use of impressionistic and anecdotal forms of knowledge versus a more systematic and empirical assessment strategy.

In order to start the database I spent 5 days completing manual online applications to opt-in to each e-newsletter. Attempts were made to automate this process, but the varying technologies employed by different congressional offices rendered this approach ineffective. Some offices require an email address, some require full names, some do zip code checks to ensure constituent residency, and some require an answer to a survey question. Starting with the 115th Congress some use the ReCAPTCHA mechanism to filter out automated sign up attempts en masse. After the initial set up round, the database is maintained with bimonthly checks for members who did not previously send e-newsletters and checks of accuracy for current sending members. After each election I complete a new initial sign up round for the newly elected members. The back end versions of these data are housed in a dummy gmail account.

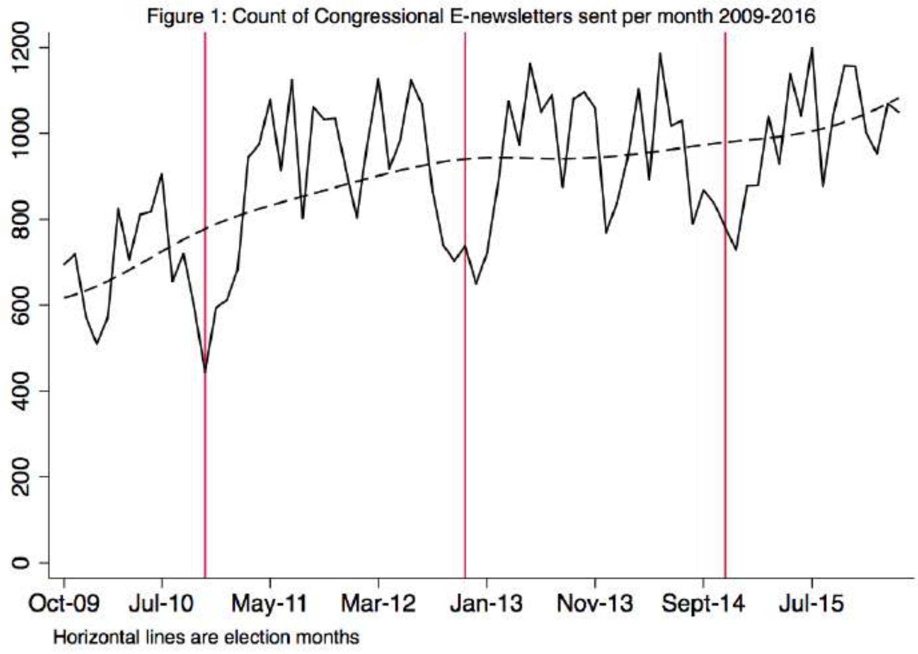
There is a wide variety of questions that could be asked and answered by this data: If all we knew about a legislator was what he or she told us in these controlled communications, how would that differ from our understanding of them via vote analyses? How do legislator's messages change over the arc of their career? Are there meaningful differences between how men and women connect with constituents? Do Republicans and Democrats have markedly different approaches in terms of topics or phrasings? How do members blame others or credit claim? And many more.

What are Congressional to constituent e-newsletters?

As of 2016, all current legislators use some of their funds to produce and maintain an official website. As connective technology advanced in the 1990s through today, legislators began to send "e-newsletters" that constituents could sign up for through official House and Senate websites.[1] Electronic communications allow members to craft a positive and virtually unmediated presentation of themselves and their legislative efforts to constituents in a manner that is quicker and oftentimes more visually entertaining than traditional franked mail.

As is the case with most other technological innovations, Representatives in the House were much more in tune with changing ways to connect with constituents than Senators and therefore the spread of legislator-to-constituents emails diffused through the House faster than through the Senate. The overall adoption of online technologies is generally sporadic and legislator driven.

While all legislators maintain a website, not all send e-newsletters to constituents, but the vast majority do. In the 111th Congress, 97 percent of House members and 85 percent of Senators had set up e-newsletters. By the 114th Congress these numbers were 98% and 92% respectively.[2,3] Every day roughly 30 members of Congress send an e-newsletter out to constituents. On average, Republicans send more messages than Democrats –a phenomenon but members of both parties set up the capacity to send e-newsletters independent of both political ideology and extremity.[4] Just a month into a new Republican administration I do not find signs of a partisan reversal in use of e-



newsletters, Republicans still send far more messages over this medium than Democrats.

Because e-newsletters are opt-in, subscriber-based services, e-newsletters are considered solicited messages and are exempted from pre-election restrictions that exist for traditional mail (Glassman 2007). While e-newsletters are prepared by legislators in their official capacity and at taxpayer expense - as opposed to being prepared by a reelection campaign team - only 7 members or 1% (159/11021) of all messages sent in the first session of the 114th Congress include the disclaimer required on all traditional franked mail, "This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense."[5] Legislators include more pictures, partisan references, and biographical information in their official e-newsletters than allowed in their official traditional mail.

E-newsletters are a unique, direct, and increasingly popular medium for legislator-to-constituent communication. Furthermore, scholars have warned about the greater likelihood that online communications may play in manipulating the public (Ayres, 1999) – but none have focused on official Congress-to-constituent communications. In addition to readership and potential impacts, these e-newsletters provide direct evidence of the purposeful behaviors of sitting members of Congress and offer insights for scholars of political communications, political strategy, and history. If nothing more than as a way to chronicle history – an examination of these communications provides insight into the intents and attempts of members of Congress to influence constituents.

Members of Congress increasingly rely on online political communications such as e-newsletters to reach constituents. Every day roughly 30 members of Congress send such a message out; the content of such actions merit academic scrutiny.

Different and more information

One key difference between e-newsletters and paper newsletters is the variety and amount of information that each media may contain. Communicating electronically offers many more interactive features than traditional paper mail. Freer from restrictions limiting the amount and size of color photos that may be printed for traditional mail, members of Congress include many color photos, images and infographics, hyperlinks to related articles, voice recordings, youtube videos and more in e-newsletters.

Congressional office know that traditional media such as daily newspapers and network news no longer has the sway over the population that it used to. In response, legislators are eager to add their own information to the wide media universe.

A benefit of e-newsletters over franked mail is that legislators sometimes get around black out restrictions 60 days prior to elections. Sixty days prior to a primary or general election – members of Congress may not send any district-wise franked mail, but if an office chooses to run their e-newsletters as a list of "opt-in" subscribers - as all can and nearly all do - then there is no ban on sending the messages because they are not unsolicited. Figure 1 shows the number of e-newsletters sent overtime. Each value represents a count of individual legislators sending a message on a given day. The red vertical lines represent federal elections.

As is evidenced by the dips pre and post-election days, there is a decrease in number of messages sent around election time, but many members still send out communications. The dip before an election is likely due to more than just adherence to black out guidelines. Some members observe the 60 day black out period, some members are hesitant to use official communication channels during the period before an election lest they be accused of inappropriately using their office to campaign, and some simply focus on the election activities rather than constituent communications during this time period.

There is also some time after an election during which communications decrease and then slowly increase in volume. This pattern is attributable to a few things. First, there is a honeymoon period for each office after winning an election. For incumbents, their staff are generally more relaxed following the intense campaign seasons; during this period there is a less pressing commitment to connect with constituents. Second, there is sometimes a holiday lull as members and their staffs leave their D.C. duties for some time around the end of the year holidays. Third, some members have lost and as if that occurs a legislator typically sends none or one e-newsletter for the rest of their term. If a legislator sends an e-newsletter after an electoral loss, it is usually of the sort that thanks constituents for previously supporting them and summarizes the lessons learned in office.

For non-incumbents who win seats for the first time there is a 2-month lag before they start their terms so no official e-newsletters can be sent during that period. Additionally, after starting a new term for a first time legislator there is an introductory period of steep learning and adaptation that occurs; setting up an e-newsletter system is often not at the top of the priority list.

Precise and instant timing

Unlike franked mail that must be physically printed, relies on the U.S. Post Office for delivery, and is subject to the mail checking habits of constituents, email messages can be drafted, sent, and received very quickly. This capacity can be very helpful to members of Congress seeking to shape a narrative in an age where speed can sometimes trump accuracy in how political debates are frames. Within hours of events that command national focus such as the 2016 New Jersey and New York bombings, Obama's announcement of executive action on immigration in 2014, or key Supreme Court decisions such as the 2013 decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, members send out e-newsletters to constituents.

In a proactive way, members also often use e-newsletters to remind constituents of upcoming events such as town halls, telephone conference calls with the Representative, or appearances on cable news shows. The connected nature of e-newsletters reduces the mental costs constituents needs to use in order to access more information. When a member advertises a town hall – they can provide a map linked to Google Maps so a user may get customized directions. Members may include a hyperlink for interested persons to register their attendance at a talk or job fair. The speed and ease of online communications allows members to reach constituents faster and allows them to offer far more information than allowed by Franked mail.

A report from a presentation testing vendor that analyzed open rates and click through rates of 4,000 e-newsletters produced the following actionable guidelines for Congress members:[6]

- If you want constituents to open the e-newsletter, your best chance is to send it on Sunday; do not send it on a Wednesday.
- The best time of day to send a Congressional e-newsletter is in the afternoon; do not send it in the early morning.
- Subject lines of wildly differing lengths can generate high open rates. The real difference is the effect on click-through rates: Shorter subject lines generate much higher click-through rates than longer subject lines.

Using a sample month of July 2016, legislators seem to adhere to the afternoon advice with most messages arriving at 2:00 pm (Figure 2, next page). However, legislators do not follow the advice on which days of the week are best to reach constituents. Instead of the recommended Sunday delivery, they seem to prefer Fridays (Figure 3, next page).

Audience Considerations

There is no consensus that legislators are writing specifically to either base or swing voters. It is also not clear if either group is more likely to receive these communications, or if either group is more likely to change voting intention based on vote revelations. Unlike campaign communications, which are sometimes quite recipient-specific in their content as a result of micro-targeting efforts (Levy 2008), official communications are nearly always the same regardless of the receiver. The only potential for constituents of the same district to see different official messages arises if a legislator asks subscribers to select different topics of interest to limit the types of messages that each subscriber receives. This does not threaten my analyses for three reasons: 1. Very few legislators (7%) include this option on their subscriptions. 2. Even when legislators have such an option for subscription, many eschew writing specific category letters and instead just compose and send general letters that all subscribers receive. 3. If a legislator has such a system, I subscribed to all categories.

Interviews with press secretaries, the recorded nature of these messages, and legislator encouragement to forward the messages suggest that the audience is broader than just base voters. Yet, a study of electronic message recipients from state level political office campaigns indicates that recipients tend to be more extreme than the general population (Herrnson, Stokes-Brown & Hindman 2007). Something particular to the medium of e-newsletter versus other communication outlets such as TV and radio interviews, or newspaper coverage and op-eds is that the audience is almost guaranteed to be more politically inclined in the first place. While

Figure 2

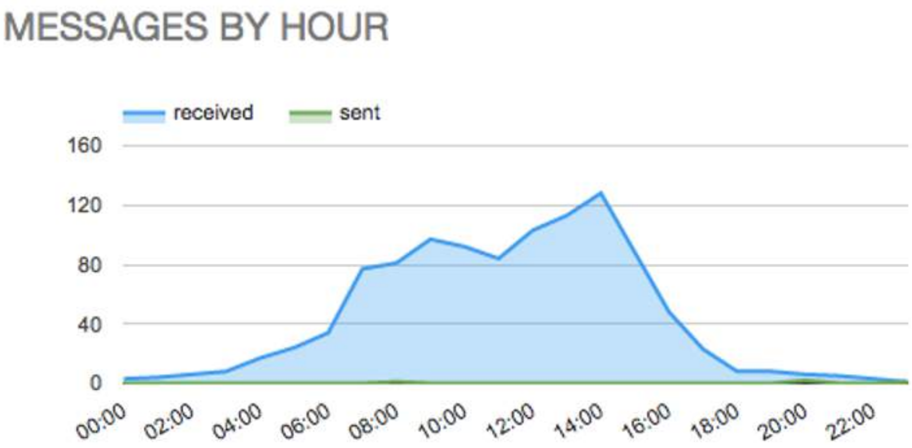
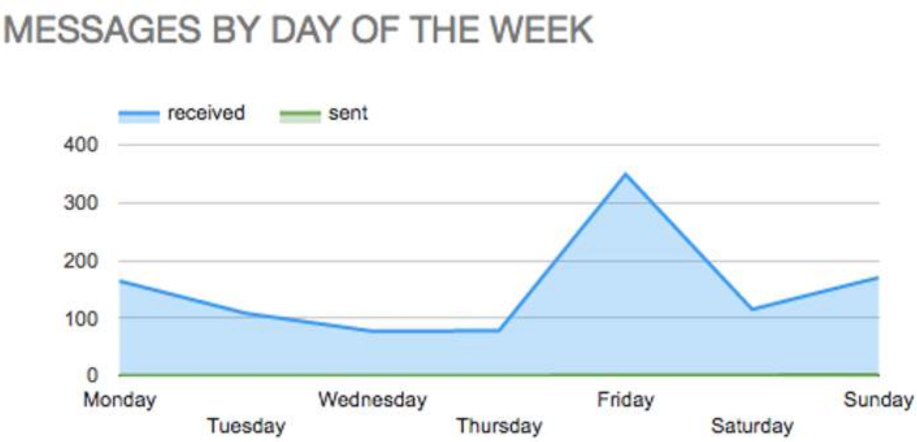


Figure 3



press secretaries are keen to maintain that messages are not tailored for any specific sort of audience – as they go out to the whole district of those constituents who opt-in – it is understood that the people who take the time to sign up for a legislator e-newsletters are more generally politically knowledgeable and more ideologically extreme than the average constituent.

By law, legislators cannot send unsolicited official e-newsletters. Everyone who receives congressional e-newsletters must first sign up on the member's website or consent to that use of their e-mail address as part of a poll or opt-in system.[8] To find out more about the types of people who sign up for official e-newsletters I placed questions on the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES draws from a nationally representative survey population for the full survey. The specific question posed to a randomly selected 1,000 respondents was, "Have you ever subscribed to e-mail updates such as an e-newsletter or Real Simple Syndication (RSS) feed from any of the following elected officials?" followed by the name of their Representative, junior Senator, and senior Senator.

Approximately 19% of respondents reported signing up for official messages from their Representative and 14% from their Senators. I found that people who have subscribed to such communications are, on average, older, more educated, wealthier, more politically active, slightly more politically extreme, and are more likely to vote in primary elections, more likely to approve of their incumbent legislators, and think higher of Congress in general than non-subscribers. This is the only specific survey data on this media conducted to date. Table 1 (next page) presents the observed differences between subscribers and non-subscribers.

What information do official e-newsletters contain?

Legislator e-newsletters contain many types of messages. To get a taste for the variation, Table 2 (next page) shows the subject lines of a randomly generated sample of 10 e-newsletters from the database.

As Table 2 makes clear, there are e-newsletters based on political positions, such as Representative Nolan's call to ban foreign steel or Representative Hall's argument that credit card companies are to be check to protect small businesses, there are messages that provide information to constituents about grant opportunities, messages attempting to drive traffic on social media platforms, messages indicating a member of Congress performed oversight duties of an executive agency, met with visitors to the capitol, some subject lines are more provocative inviting readers to open the actual email to find out the content of a legislators teaser title. In the case of Representative Webster's "What Really Happened?" he was referring to Speaker Boehner's announcement that he would create a select subcommittee to investigate the Benghazi attacks in an "attempt to discover the full truth of what actually occurred." The number subject line offered by Representative Holt was the number of New Jersey workers who would receive a raise if Governor Chris Christie approved a change to the minimum wage.

Database challenges, uses and future prospects

To date the challenges with making these texts available to researchers involve providing continuous updates and improving enhanced searching speeds. A new process for connecting the back end data to a more readily available format for researchers should go live in April 2017. The current online database can take up to a minute to load and the process of optimizing access is ongoing.

The inclination that legislators would move to e-newsletters over traditional franked mail on a large scale has been born out in analyses of members' representational allowance spending (Glassman, 2015). However, the content of these communications has been far less attended to in academic research. Despite semi continuous individual level requests for the data at the time of writing just 2 journal publications and one online indexed working paper have made use of the DCinbox data.

At the outset of the collection effort, there was no directed goal in studying legislative-executive relations. Instead, on a hunch that many in Congress would eventually shift their efforts to e-newsletters over from traditional newsletters given concerns of speed and cost, I thought it would be worthwhile to collect and archive these communications. My immediate goal was to develop something interesting and insightful based on this new archive. My long-term hope was that many political communication theories could be tested, and new ones could be developed based on this corpus.

The preceding discussion should offer a glimpse of what this medium looks like; interested readers may see full text e-newsletters from any member of Congress on www.dcinbox.com and for a faster searching experience interested parties can also check https://dcinbox.herokuapp.com/

Notes

1. At the very beginning of e-newsletters, citizens were asked to send a postcard through traditional mail processes requesting to be put on an email list with their physical and electronic addresses. Staffers soon pointed out the disconnect between the sign up procedure and the eventual e-news delivery and this practices ceased. For the most comprehensive, first person account of the diffusion of e-newsletter and other technology adoptions in the House and Senate of the 1990s see Casey, C. (1996). *The Hill on the Net: Congress Enters the Information Age*. Burlington: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

2. These percentages greatly exceed those observed in state legislative bodies (Herrnson, Stokes-Brown & Hindman 2007).

3. The hold outs without e-newsletters are Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), Bennie

Table 1: Average Differences Between E-Newsletter Subscribers and Non-Subscribers = CCES 2012

	Subscribers	Non-Subscribers	Difference
Voted in a primary election	68%	41%	17%*
Age	53	46	7*
Female	46%	53%	7%
Education Attainment	3.65	3.11	0.54*
Registered Voter	92%	77%	15%*
Family Income Level	19.84	16.28	3.56
Conservative Ideology	4.42	4.19	0.23
Representative Disapproval	2.36	2.4	0.04
Senator 1 Disapproval	2.32	2.51	0.19
Senator 2 Disapproval	2.14	2.47	0.33*
Congressional Thermometer	3.11	3.61	0.50*
Contact Elected Official	73%	23%	50%*
Attend Political Meeting	44%	21%	23%*
Boycott Politically	59%	32%	27%*
Attend March or Rally	17%	8%	9%*
Post Opinion Online	81%	47%	34%*
Distribute Political Info	52%	19%	33%*
Donate Money	50%	23%	27%*
Use Twitter	24%	21%	3%
Use other social media	75%	68%	7%
N	259	741	

* = $p < 0.05$

Data and question wording available at:
http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces/home

Table 2: Sample of 10 Official Congress-to-Constituent E-newsletters

Sender	Date	Subject Line
Representative Rick Nolan (R-MN)	11/23/15	Ban Foreign Steel Imports for 5 Years
Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY)	11/10/15	Federal Grant Opportunities - November 10, 2015
Representative Mimi Walters (R-CA)	7/21/15	Are you following me on Instagram?
Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)	4/24/15	E-News: Senator Collins Questions Top Transportation Official; Welcomes More Than 400 Mainers to Our Nation's Capitol; Celebrates Maine's Innovators and More
Representative Patrick McHenry (R-NC)	6/8/14	Congressman McHenry Weekly Update
Representative Daniel Webster (R-FL)	5/5/14	What really happened?
Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ)	12/7/12	537,535
Representative Mike Kelly (R-PA)	3/5/12	Representative Kelly's Survey of the Week

Thompson (D-MS), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Robert Brady (D-PA), Pedro Pierluisi (D-Puerto Rico), Stacey Plaskett (D-Virgin Islands),

4. Member ideology, as measured by first and second dimension DW-NOMINATE scores is virtually uncorrelated with sending e-newsletters. The respective correlations are .01 and .04. Legislator extremity measured by squaring DW-NOMINATE first dimension scores is also not related to whether a legislator sends e-newsletters.

5. Representative Dan Benishek (MI-1), Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (CA-12), Representative Leonard Lance (NJ-7), Congressman John Larson (CT-1), Senator Tom Cotton (AR), Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren (CA-19), Congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema (AZ-9).

6. This is a summary, for the full list of guidelines see Presentation Testing Inc. (2011). *Research Report: The Data-Driven Congressional Office: Evaluating E-Newsletter Readership Trends to More Effectively Connect with Constituents*. Washington D.C.: Congresstional Institute.

7. This is much like the understanding of visitors to campaign websites. Engaged supporters visit candidate's websites with greater frequency than other voters, despite the fact that creators of campaign websites maintain that they are created for general and undecided voters (Druckman, Kifer & Parkin 2010).

8. The opt-in characterization of legislator e-mail can be somewhat disputed. Citizens can subscribe in the typical way by visiting a legislator website and explicitly signing up to receive e-mail updates, but other, more covert sign up methods exist. If a citizen e-mails an legislator on some issue, or takes a survey on the legislator's website in which they provide their e-mail address, those addresses are sometime captured and then added to the list of citizens who explicitly signed up to receive e-newsletter updates, usually with the caveat of consenting to this act. Additionally, some office staff keep e-mail addresses from term to term even if a different legislator has been elected. Some members of the House that later get elected to the Senate also keep the e-mail addresses of citizens who subscribed to their House e-newsletters and then use those addresses when sending their Senate e-newsletters.

Bibliography

Ayres, J. M. (1999). *From the streets to the Internet: The cyber-diffusion of contention*. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science , 566 (1), 132–143.

Casey, C. (1996). *The Hill On the Net: Congress Enters the Information Age*. Burlington: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

Druckman, J. M., Kifer, M. J., & Parkin, M. (2010). "Timeless Strategy Meets a New Medium: Going Negative on Congressional Campaign Web Site, 2002-2006." *Political Communication* , 27 (1), 88-103.

Duggan, M., Ellison, N., Lampe, C., Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2015 January). "Social Media Update 2014." Pew Research Center.

Glassman, M. E. (2015). "Franking Privilege: Historical Development and Options for Change." Congressional Research Service, 1-26.

Glassman, M. E., Straus, J. R., & Shogan, C. J. (2013 1-13-March). "Social Networking and Constituent Communications: Members' Use of Twitter and Facebook During a Two-Month Period in the 112th Congress." Congressional Research Service.

Grimmer, J. (2013). *Representational Style in Congress: What Legislators Say and Why It Matters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grimmer, J., & King, G. (2010)." A Bayesian hierarchical topic model for political texts: Measuring expressed agendas in Senate press releases." *Political Analysis*, 18 (1), 1-35.

Gulati, G. J. (2008). "Congressional Candidates' Use of YouTube in 2008: Its Frequency and Rationale." *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*, 7 (2), 93-109.

Herrnson, P. S., Stokes-Brown, A. K., & Hindman, M. (2007). "Campaign Politics and the Digital Divide: Constituency Characteristics, Strategic Considerations, and Candidate Internet Use in State Legislative Elections." *Political Research Quarterly*,60 (1), 31-42.

Hill, K. Q., & Hurley, P. A. (2002). "Symbolic Speeches in the U.S. Senate and Their Representational Implications." *The Journal of Politics*, 64 (1), 219–231.

Lipinski, D. (2004). *Congressional Communication*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Maltzman, F., & Sigelman, L. (1996). "The Politics of Talk: Unconstrained Floor Time in the U.S. House of Representatives. *The Journal of Politics*, 58 (3), 819-830.

Neiheisel, J. R., & Niebler, S. (2010). "The Strategic Use of Party Brand Labels in Political Advertising, 1998-2008." Midwest Political Science Association Conference.

Richardson, L. E., Daugherty, L. M., & Freeman, P. K. (2001). "E-mail Contact between Constitutents and State Legislators." *State & Local Government Review*, 33 (1), 23-31.

Trammell, K. D., & Williams, A. P. (2004). "Beyond Direct Mail: Evaluating Candidate E-Mail Messages in the 2002 Florida Gubernatorial Campaign." *Journal of E-Government*, 1 (1), 105-122.

Xenos, M., & Foot, K. A. (2005). "Politics As Usual, or Politics Unusual? Position-Taking and Dialogue on Campaign Web Sites in the 2002 U.S. Elections." *Journal of Communication*, 55 (1), 169–185.

Yiannakis, D. E. (1982). “House Members’ Communication Styles: Newsletters and Press Releases." *The Journal of Politics* , 44 (4), 1049-1071.

Editors

Gisela Sin

Gisela Sin is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A Fulbright scholar who received her PhD in political science from the University of Michigan, she studies political institutions, emphasizing the strategic elements of separation of powers. She is the author of *Separation of Powers and Legislative Organization: the President, the Senate, and Political Parties in the Making of House Rules*, published by Cambridge University Press and winner of the Alan Rosenthal Prize from the Legislative Studies Section. She is co-author of a book on Argentinean institutions, *Congreso, Presidencia, y Justicia en Argentina*. She has published numerous articles on American and Comparative politics and is currently examining the strategic use of vetoes in the US States and Latin America. She is the co-chair of the Legislative Studies Group at the Latin America Political Science Association.

Laurel Harbridge Yong

Laurel Harbridge Yong is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, and a Faculty Fellow with the Institute for Policy Research, both at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on partisan conflict and the lack of bipartisan agreement in American politics. Her 2015 book *Is Bipartisanship Dead? Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting in the House of Representatives* explores how congressional parties prioritize partisan conflict over bipartisan agreement, and how this approach to legislating affects the responsiveness of members to their constituents and policy formation. She earned her PhD at Stanford University in 2009 and her work has been published in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *American Politics Research*, among others. This research has been supported by the National Science Foundation Time Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (TESS), the Dirksen Congressional Center, and the Social Science Research Council.

Editorial Assistant

Collin Paschall

Collin Paschall is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His dissertation research focuses on the policymaking strategies of members of Congress, particularly the legislative behavior of "policy wonks." Other current research activities include projects on the legislative consequences of congressional scandal (with William Bernhard and Tracy Sulkin), patterns of politicization in federal procurement (with Jennifer Selin), and the rhetoric of the debate over gun control policy (with Benjamin Kantack). Collin received his J.D. from The George Washington University Law School and his B.A. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Contributors

Chris Bonneau

Chris W. Bonneau is associate professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh and co-editor of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*. His research is on judicial selection and state politics and has been published in journals such as the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, and several others. His most recent book (coauthored with Damon Cann), *Voters' Verdicts*, was the recipient of the 2016 Virginia Gray Award for the best book published in state politics in the last 3 years.

Jason Casellas

Jason P. Casellas is an associate professor of political science at the University of Houston. He specializes in American politics, with research and teaching interests in Latino politics, legislative politics, and state and local politics. He is the author of *Latino Representation in State Houses and Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press.) He is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the Samuel DuBois Cook Postdoctoral Fellowship at Duke University, and a United States Studies Centre Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Sydney. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Politics*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *American Politics Research*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and other peer-reviewed journals. He is a member of the Texas Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights and the Advanced Placement U.S. Government Development Committee.

Carolyn Coberly

Carolyn Coberly is a PhD candidate at the University of Virginia, where she specializes in the politics of dictatorship. Her research focuses on multi-party competition in electoral authoritarian regimes. A former U.S. diplomat and Congressional aide, Ms. Coberly has a M.A. in Russian and East European Studies from Harvard University and a B.A. in Government from Cornell University.

Lindsey Cormack

Lindsey Cormack is an assistant professor of Political Science and Director of the Diplomacy Lab at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. She earned her Ph.D. in 2014 from New York University specializing in the U.S. Congress and political communication. Her research on congressional communications has been published in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* and *Gender Studies* as well as in popular outlets including the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Hill*. She maintains the only digital database of all official Congress-to-constituent e-newsletters at www.dcinbox.com and https://dcinbox.herokuapp.com/ .

Charles J. Finocchiaro

Charles J. Finocchiaro is Associate Professor and Vice Chair in the Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina. He received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University, where he was a Fellow in the Political Institutions and Public Choice Program. His research focuses on the role of political parties in shaping various aspects of legislative politics as well as the transformation of the U.S. House of Representatives during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His work has been recognized with the Pi Sigma Alpha Award for the best paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association and the CQ Press Award for the best paper on legislative politics presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, and appears in outlets such as the American Journal of Political Science, Legislative Studies Quarterly, and Political Research Quarterly. He was formerly on the faculty at the University at Buffalo, SUNY, and will be joining the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center and the Department of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma later this year.

Christopher D. Grady

Christopher Grady is a PhD Student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He studies political psychology, intergroup conflict, political institutions, international development, and behavioral incentives, among other things. His current projects examine conflict prevention programs in rural and urban areas of Nigeria, and the effect of foreign aid on violence in Africa. He has collaborated with NGOs Equal Access International and MercyCorps on academic and policy work throughout Africa. His research has been funded by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Evidence in Governance and Politics, and has been recommended for an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant. He received his AA from Grand Rapids Community College and his BA in Political Science from the University of Michigan.

Brian Humes

Brian D. Humes is a program officer in the Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation. He has been at the foundation for over a decade. Currently, he is a program officer for the Political Science program as well as a member of the RAISE (Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering) management team. He has also served as a program manager or part of the management team for special competitions like HSD (Human and Social Dynamics), IGERT (Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship), IBSS (Interdisciplinary Behavioral and Social Science), and the European Science Foundation's HumVIB (Cross-National and Multi-Level Analysis of Human Values, Institutions and Behavior), among others. He has served as both Acting Deputy Division Director and Acting Division Director of the Division of Social and Economic Sciences at NSF. While at NSF, he has been an adjunct professor at both Georgetown University and George Washington University. He has also served as an instructor at the Essex Summer School in Social Science and Data Analysis. Prior to joining the National Science Foundation, he was a faculty member at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Michigan State University.

Matthew Lacombe

Matt Lacombe is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Northwestern University. He specializes in American politics. His research broadly focuses on understanding and explaining political power in the U.S. His current projects examine the development of interest group power over time, as well as the political preferences and behavior of U.S. billionaires.

Frances Lee

Frances E. Lee is professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. She is co-editor of *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Most recently, she is author of *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (University of Chicago Press 2016). Her 2009 book *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (University of Chicago Press 2009) received the LSS's Richard F. Fenno Award. She is also coauthor of *Sizing Up The Senate:The Unequal Consequences of Equal Representation* (University of Chicago Press 1999) and a textbook, *Congress and Its Members* (Sage / CQ Press). Her research has appeared in numerous journal outlets, including the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, and others. In 2002-2003, she worked on Capitol Hill as an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow.

Frank Mackaman

Frank H. Mackaman directs the work of The Dirksen Congressional Center (Pekin, Illinois), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. Previously director of the Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum, he holds a PhD and an MA in American history from the University of Missouri and a BA from Drake University. Mackaman's publications include *Seeking Bipartisanship: My Life in Politics* [coauthored with Ray LaHood, former member of Congress and Secretary of Transportation], *Understanding Congressional Leadership: The State of the Art*, *Gerald R. Ford: Presidential Perspectives from the National Archives*, and *The Education of a Senator: Everett McKinley Dirksen*. He has taught courses on the presidency and Congress at the University of Michigan and Bradley University. He is a past president of the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress and a former mayor and interim city manager for the city of Pekin.

Shane Martin

Shane Martin is Reader in Comparative Politics at the University of Essex. He received his PhD from Dublin City University Business School in 2002. His research focuses on how electoral incentives shape representatives' preferences, the internal structures of legislatures and executive oversight. Recent research by him has appeared in the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Electoral Studies*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. He is co-editor, with Kaare Strøm and Thomas Saalfeld, of the *Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies* (Oxford University Press 2014) and, with Bjørn Erik Rasch and José Antonio Cheibub, of *Parliaments and Government Formation: Unpacking Investiture Rules* (Oxford University Press 2015). He currently holds a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship.

Markie McBrayer

Markie McBrayer is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Houston. Broadly, her research focuses on urban politics and policy, with a special emphasis on how local institutions shape policy outcomes and output. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Texas at Austin and received her MA in urban planning and policy from Tufts University.

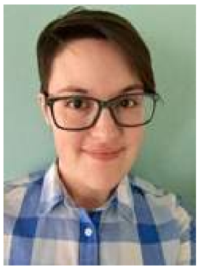
Katti McNally

Katti McNally is a Ph.D. candidate in Government and Politics at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her current research focuses on member behavior and the representation of disadvantaged groups in the U.S. Congress. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Hastings College in Hastings, Nebraska.

Carol Mershon

Carol Mershon is a Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University. Her research focuses on political institutions, legislative politics, multiparty government, intraparty competition, the dynamics of party systems, and diversity in academe. Mershon's articles have appeared in such journals as *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, and *Politics & Gender*. She is the author of *The Costs of Coalition* (Stanford 2002) and co-editor of *Political Parties and Legislative Party Switching* (Palgrave Macmillan 2009). Her most recent book is *Party System Change in Legislatures Worldwide*, with Olga Shvetsova (Cambridge 2013). The recipient of three NSF awards, Mershon has also held three Fulbright grants, a Social Science Research Council Fellowship, and a Fellowship from the Collegio Carlo Alberto, Turin. Mershon serves on the International Scientific Board, *Italian Review of Political Science*, and the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Politics*. For more information, see her website and Google scholar profile.

Charla Waeiss



Charla Waeiss is a fifth-year PhD student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, with a focus on electoral politics and political behavior. Her current research examines the relationship between party transformation, partisanship, and voter behavior. She earned her Bachelor of Arts at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan.

Sophia Jordán Wallace

Sophia Jordán Wallace is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington. She received her Ph.D. from Cornell University. She specializes in Latino Politics, legislative politics, social movements, and immigration politics and policy. Her work has been published in various journals including the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Politics, Groups & Identities*, *American Politics Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Political Science Quarterly*. She is a co-founder and co-organizer of SPIRE, Symposium on the Politics of Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity, which is an annual conference of race, ethnicity, and politics scholars. She is currently working on a book, *United We Stand: Latino Representation in Congress*, which examines the ways legislators serve the interests of Latinos across a variety of legislative behaviors and the substantive impact of Latino representatives.

Fabio Wasserfallen

Fabio Wasserfallen is since 2014 Assistant Professor of Political Economy at the Salzburg Centre of European Union Studies. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Political Science at the University of Zurich in 2013 after a yearly fellowship at Harvard University's Weatherhead Centre for International Affairs. In the academic year 2014/15, he was in residence at Princeton University as one of six selected international early-career scholars of the Fung Global Fellows Program. Among others, his research interests include European integration, policy diffusion, federalism, and direct democracy. Currently, Fabio Wasserfallen co-coordinates the Horizon 2020 research project "EMU choices" on economic and fiscal integration in the EU. His research has been published or is forthcoming in journals such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *British Journal of Political Science* and the *European Journal of Political Research*.

How To Subscribe

The Legislative Scholar is distributed electronically to all members of the Legislative Studies Section of APSA. To join the section, please visit www.apsanet.org.

Previous issues of the newsletter will be posted to www.legislativestudies.org/legislativescholar.

Address: 1527 New Hampshire Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20036-1206
Phone: (202) 483-2515 | Fax: (202) 483-2657 | Email: apsa@apsanet.org